

RESISTANCE ON THE ROCK: SEX WORKERS IN NL “TALK BACK”

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation has found that the ways in which sex workers in St. John's, Newfoundland resist stigma, by "talking back" to power, challenges conventional sociological understandings of the concepts of stigma and stigma management. Rather than problematizing the negative outcomes of stigma for individuals, as in the majority of stigma research, the current research problematizes stigma as a sociological concept in and of itself. In doing so, it addresses shortcomings in traditional sociological theorizing, including Goffman's (1963) inattention to structural stigma; and the inadequacy of his concept of stigma management as a means of understanding the stigmatized person's agency. The focus on how sex workers' "talk back" to power revealed their critical analyses of structural stigma, as well as the agentic resistance inherent in their everyday talk.

Providing a conceptualization of resistance *via individuals' talk* also furthers sex work research; as it has hitherto understood 'resistance' in terms of community/collective advocacy primarily.

Reliance on Miller's (2000, 2003) unique form of discourse analysis facilitates analysis of interviews for the politicality inherent therein, offering a variety of ways to rethink how stigma is resisted in the everyday talk of the marginalized. Further explorations of resistance are then presented in the form of three distinct publications. This format results in a multi-pronged approach that explores sex worker resistance to religion/community (Publication One), to policy makers and theorists of certain persuasions (Publication Two) and to the

social nature of law (~Publication Threeⁱ), respectively. Whereas the first publication is mainly empirical, the other two publications explore theoretical ways that sociologists might go beyond Goffmanian understandings of stigma. Thus, Fraser's (2003) misrecognition is discussed as a framework that seeks to integrate interpersonal and structural stigma, while Thrift's (1997, 2004, 2008) non-representational theory is suggested for possible use in future research, especially research at the micro-level of embodied action.

Traditional stigma research positions sex workers as research subjects; progressive approaches such as van der Meulen's (2011) Community Action Research views sex workers as co-researchers in advocacy research. However, the current research adapts those ideas and extends the idea of resistance, and advocacy in research, to sex workers "talking back" at the interactional level. Simultaneously, this analysis hopes to more accurately reflect both understandings of, and resistance to, stigma for people who do sex work in St. John's. As a result, sex workers are now to be seen as active agents capable of informing and re-thinking the sociological concepts and theories that have traditionally been used to research them and their lives.

ⁱ This chapter is designation with a tilde, ie ~Publication Three, to indicate that although it was prepared for publication and was submitted; it now has the status of 'revise and re-submit'.

DEDICATION

For Bridget. For Caroline. For Cynthia. For Jenn. For Nicki. For Victoria. For Paul. You are loved and remembered. Rest in Power.

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Overview of Dissertation

The majority of sex work literature has examined the impacts of stigma on areas such as access to health care, social exclusion and legal ramifications in the lives of sex workers. While this approach has problematized the outcomes of stigma for individuals, it has not problematized our sociological understanding of the concept in and of itself, and so the concept remains undertheorized. Most studies draw, in particular, on Goffman's (1963) notion of stigma as a spoiled identity, which the stigmatized must "manage" in the interest of accommodating the "normals".

This understanding of stigma, however, fails to recognize two key factors that sex workers themselves drew attention to in this current research: the structural aspects of stigma and their resistance to stigma (including the idea that they should be burdened with alleviating the social unease of those who inflict stigma upon them). Sex workers in this study not only managed stigma but agentively resisted it. The majority of sex work stigma literature has explored resistance through collective advocacy. The current research differs in that it explores resistance found in the everyday talk of sex workers, enacted through strategies that reverse, challenge and exaggerate dominant cultural understandings of their lives and identities. This exploration of resistance has both empirical and theoretical dimensions.

Empirically, the first half of this dissertation is concerned with demonstrating the utility of a novel form of qualitative analysis to study everyday resistance. That

is, by (mainly) adopting Miller's theory and method of discourse analysis, which analyzes everyday language for the often ambiguous, sometimes covert forms of resistance found within the everyday talk of the marginalized, we see that sex workers not only resist stigma, but also "talk back" to power relations. By paying attention to how sex workers "talk back" we also see how they are in fact often redefining stigma as inherently structural; enmeshed in power relations associated with religion, professional discourses and the law. Further, we see that sex workers are using their interpersonal interactions (i.e. everyday talk) as a form of resistance to that structural stigma.

Thus, sex workers themselves are informing a new, deeper conceptualization of stigma that may be able to move us beyond the current sex work and sociological literature. In the current research, this reconceptualization includes moving away from Goffman's rather limited understanding of the stigmatized's agency as merely 'management' to a more assertive and political conceptualization of subjective agency. In the process, stigma is re-theorized so as to prioritize agency and to account for the structural and interpersonal aspects of stigma simultaneously.

In terms of Goffman's concern with (spoiled) identity, the stability inherent in his fixed concept of 'identity pegs' means that, for him, stigma management is the primary form of agency available to a person in response to their stigmatized identity. In contrast, the reconceptualization informed by the sex workers in this study is more clearly related to the fluidity and tacit politicality found in certain feminist conceptions of subjective agency (Fraser, 2003; Miller, 2000; 2003)

which replaces and goes beyond Goffman's inadequacies in this regard.

Moreover, this agency is understood as being constantly involved in everyday agonistic struggle, so that sex workers are constantly having to navigate power relations.

Whereas much sociological writing understands sex workers' agency as rather minimal, (often choosing to understand them as 'victims' instead), this dissertation attempts to display the subtle and nuanced forms of everyday resistance, rather than management, that sex workers display. In doing so they also problematize the concept of stigma in and of itself. Moreover, they also identify stigma at a structural level, through their talk, as well. Thus, in the particular locale of St. John's, religion is massively emphasized as one such structural stigma; as is displayed in Publication One. But the fine-grained empirical analysis of resistance is not all this research seeks to accomplish.

The second half of this dissertation then turns its attention to alternative ways of theorizing and conceptualizing stigma. For example, Publication Two examines Fraser's "misrecognition," which involves status subordination resulting in lack of full citizenship. In this publication, Fraser (2003) theorizes the institutionalized patterns of cultural value and the ways these patterns affect the relative standing of individuals. This approach may be applicable to sex workers because, in their talk, they referred to relations of power that structure interaction according to social norms that they find oppressive. They also noticed that the ways in which these relations of power structure their interaction impedes parity of participation; or constitutes some categories of actors as

normative and others as deficient or inferior. Thus 'misrecognition' may prove to be a more useful theoretical conceptualization, as it acknowledges the interpersonal and structural facets of stigma, as well as the ways in which the structural informs the interpersonal to create relationships of inequality, and the resistance to these inequalities.

~Publication Three also explores an alternative to Goffmanian theorizing but does so at the micro-level. Whereas misrecognition theorizes the ways in which the structural enters into interpersonal interactions; Thrift's (2008) Non-Representational Theory (NRT) provides a framework to possibly guide future study in this area and to further the current focus on the resistance found within everyday talk. NRT is a "geography of what happens"; it emphasizes sensitivities rather than knowledge and focuses on the interaction between affect/sensation and practices as it impacts the politics of everyday life.

Thrift's attention to the unconventional agency found in momentary interactions suggests another way of studying the small moments in which misrecognition is felt. In addition, it provides an avenue to move beyond this project's focus on resistance as located in everyday talk, so as to explore the ways in which similar types of covert and hidden resistance show up in the minutiae of embodied activity. This approach opens up space for researching the embodied activities of sex work as a form of resistance in and of itself. Thus, as sex workers become active agents in informing the sociological concepts and theories that have traditionally been used to research them, new possibilities for future research are also created.

The dissertation that follows is a non-traditional format consisting of an introductory chapter and two methods chapters. One methodological chapter deals with my methodological journey, and the second presents some preliminary results of the ‘mixed methods’ approach that I discovered en route. Three independent publications are then presented, two of which are currently published. Finally, the dissertation ends with a concluding chapter.² Each of the three publication chapters has its own distinct bibliography, but the references for the remaining chapters (One, Two, Three and Seven) are presented in a master bibliography at the end of the concluding chapter.

Because the trajectory and evolution of this thinking did not follow the chronological development and publication of Chapters Four, Five and Six (Publication One, Two and ~Publication Three, respectively), they are in many ways distinct; however, the goal of each should be seen as explorations of how sex workers “talk back”, albeit in different ways. These publications should also be understood as explorations of how we, as researchers, can get beyond the inadequacies of the Goffmanian approach to ‘stigma’. Thus, they are marked by the ways they explore the promise of recent theoretical and methodological developments within the social sciences. More specifically, the chapters explore stigma in relation to the cultural context of Newfoundland, the harms associated

² A “Preface” is presented prior to each chapter in order to give context for the movement between chapters, which are in many ways distinct, as well as providing context such as publication venue, clarification of roles when the work is co-authored, etc.

with dominant cultural understandings of sex work, and the socio-legal context of sex work, as addressed in Publications One, Two and ~Three, respectively.

Preface: Chapter One

Chapter One provides an introduction to the dissertation, reviewing sociological accounts of stigma, and of agency, as well as recent literature in the field of sex work stigma. It is first concerned with showing the inadequacies of Goffmanian-inspired concepts of 'stigma' and of 'stigma management', and with discussing promising alternative routes forward. It then proceeds to examine the sex work literature, and its continued reliance on Goffmanian theorizing. In the process, it shows the poverty that results from this research mainly concerning itself with the effects of stigma on individual lives, and with seeing agency in 'stigma management' terms only.

This introductory chapter sets the stage for research that goes beyond the current literature, in that it introduces the everyday "talk back" of sex workers as an alternative, but inherently political, form of stigma resistance. This chapter is unpublished.

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

There is a considerable body of literature relating to stigma and sex work, its focus spanning various facets of life wherein individuals are negatively impacted by stigma. Within sociology as a discipline, this research has occurred in specific areas, such as sex worker stigma as a barrier to access to healthcare, the relationship between sex worker stigma and mental wellness, the intersection between sex worker stigma and drug use, among others. This focus on the effects of stigma as an area of inquiry has sometimes led to oversimplified accounts of stigma (and its response), rather than a consideration of the ways in which it is theorized within the social sciences. In contrast, this dissertation will begin to explore more complex/nuanced understandings of stigma (and its) response, its potential for politicality and its implications for sex worker agency.

Since the turn of the century, some academic theorists (Link and Phelan, 2001; Manzo, 2004) have begun to focus on the intricacies of a sociological understanding of stigma; moreover, some of this work is occurring in the literature pertaining to sex work (Bruckert and Hannem, 2013). Nonetheless, there are differences of opinion regarding how best to move the concept forward, especially in regard to rethinking Goffman's (1963) traditional theorizing and its lack of attention to the structural aspects of social stigma. In addition, traditional theorizing largely ignores the idea of stigma resistance, especially

that which is carried out by marginalized individuals; the primary subject of this study. Thus, this dissertation begins a conversation between micro interpersonal theorizing and the larger, macro structural understandings by showing, in some detail, how a careful attention to language usage can shed significant light on both the structural and interpersonal facets of stigma.

I introduce the following paragraphs as a leitmotif for the rationale and purpose of this dissertation.

During the 2017 Remembrance Day weekend the body of a young woman was found along a wooded trail near a small farm in St. John's; she had been murdered (Cooke, 2017). The woman – a friend, sister, mother, valued community member – was also involved in the street-based sex trade. Her murder coincided in time with public outcry from residents living on the street where the majority of outdoor sex work happens in the city, denouncing the presence of the sex trade in the area. In so doing, residents were making statements which furthered stigmatization of the women they sought to remove from “their” neighborhood. What was lost in this exchange was the fact that many of the women engaged in street-based sex work also live in that area, rendering the line between “sex workers” and “residents” artificial. The police issued a public statement about the murder, it noted there was no “threat to the general public’s safety”, but that sex workers should “be extra vigilant” (Gosse, 2017). In this statement the “othering” of sex workers is implied – that the general public do not experience a threat but sex workers do – in other words, the sex worker cannot also be a member of the ‘general public’. A deeper nuance could be read that her murder occurred because of her involvement in the sex trade. This furthers the distinction between “us” and “them”, no need for “residents” to fear murder, as “residents” cannot also be sex workers.

The heartbreaking loss of this young woman, the circumstances leading to her death and the public aftermath serves as an exemplar of the stigma argument in this dissertation. In the passage above, stigmatization separates the reader of a news bulletin from one who does sex work. What this enables is a lack of empathy, a figurative separation that allows a murder victim to be somehow complicit in her own demise. Stigma is further underscored in public safety messages which exclude ‘sex workers’ from the ‘public’, it becomes the

dominant understanding in the comments sections on news articles, in which it is suggested that murder is a 'deserving' punishment for exchanging sex for money (Smellie, 2017). Stigma renders people disposable in the eyes of others. Stigma kills, in other words. All of this reactive discourse was resisted in the aftermath of this case; a former sex worker spoke out, stating that such murders could be prevented if we could change laws and change stigmatizing attitudes (Smellie, 2017). I hope for a future where such resistance will flourish...

This dissertation is focused on the experience and perception of stigma by people who do sex work in St. John's, NL. It also examines their resistance to stigma and the disjuncture between the ways in which various 'experts' have conceptualised this 'resistance', and the ways in which sex workers themselves have understood this phenomenon. The three articles of this dissertation contain examples of sex workers 'talking back' to different stigmatizing discourses, either in their own communities, in academic work about them, or in the sociopolitical landscape of Canadian sex work laws.

Thus, I argue, in line with a growing number of activist sex work researchers (van der Meulen, Durisin, & Love, 2013) that sex workers have much to say about societal stigma, and much of it is both relevant and original. As a result, this dissertation furthers previous analyses by framing sex workers' 'talking back' both theoretically and methodologically as "claims-making from the underside" (Miller, 2003 p. 92). This task is accomplished by paying explicit attention to the work that language does within the context of its use. The ways in which people who do sex work resist stigma *in their talk* informs a variety of ways to re-think the operation of, and the resistance to, stigma; as presented throughout this dissertation. Above all, this dissertation is focused on the "talking

back” of sex workers to the discursive power structures that inform the dominant interpretations and stereotypes about them and their lives.

This work was initially influenced by Jeffrey and MacDonald’s (2006a) pioneering *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back*, which highlights sex workers’ discursive resistance to the social constructions that affect their work and lives:

Sex workers also resist discursive power structures - the way they are constructed by experts and policy makers and feminists and the very real effects those constructions have. Sex workers recognize this discursive power - this refusal by others to hear and accept sex workers' own interpretation of their lives as valid and trustworthy - and they, in turn, refuse to internalize this dominant discourse. They continue to insist on their ability to describe their own reality in the face of this expert interpretation. We call this process of discursive resistance “talking back (p. 12)

I adopt their understanding of resistance in this work, focusing on sex workers and the myriad of ways they resist all of the above through their talk. As a direct result, this leads to other challenges being posed to more conventional sociological understandings of stigma.³

The research by Jeffrey and MacDonald (in which sex workers named stigma as the worst part of the job and one of the greatest burdens in their lives) represented the beginning of sex work stigma research in the Atlantic provinces;

³ It is important to note here that while there exists robust literatures within other areas such as social psychology focused on related concepts to stigma such as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, much of which is grounded in in-group vs. out-group dynamics (Brown, 2010), this dissertation focuses exclusively on the sociological concept of stigma. In large part, this is because this project arose from a desire to expand Jeffrey and MacDonald’s (2006a) work on the Maritime provinces, into the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

an important distinction given the fact that the majority of sex work research in Canada has occurred on “the mainland”, as we on the east coast of Newfoundland refer to the rest of Canada. The research conducted by Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006a) was a vital precursor to the current study, as it opened up an important conversation about sex work stigma in the different cultural contexts which constitute Canada. Equally importantly, it alerted me to a number of problems with much of the recent research on sex work stigma.

Specifically, traditional sociological theorizing on this topic has significant difficulty with capturing the “talking back” of sex workers (as Jeffrey and MacDonald showed for the Maritimes and this dissertation shows, for the island of Newfoundland), because it falls short in (at least) two ways; 1) it does not account for sex workers’ own articulations of (the structural aspects of) stigma, and 2) it fails to adequately capture the role that their subjective agency plays in resisting stigma.

With regards to the former, most traditional theorizing on stigma focuses on the “interpersonal” nature of stigma, or stigma as occurring between people at the level of shared social interaction. In contrast, sex workers in NL spoke about stigma in relation to the role of power in the relationships between people and institutions/cultural discourses (such as religion). With regards to the latter, Goffman scholars have mainly focussed on the stigmatised ‘managing’ their stigma, whereas this research shows them actually resisting the label. However, in order to understand the contributions of this “talking back” to our contemporary understanding of sex work stigma (and its response), it is

important to situate it in the overall development of Goffmanian thinking. To do that we must begin with Goffman's pioneering work, on an understanding of stigma as well as 'stigma management'.

Situating the Research: Within sociological theories of stigma

Goffman traced the origins of the term stigma back to the Greeks, who used the term to refer to "bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier" (Goffman, 1963, p. 1). He then went on to define stigma as an attribute that is deeply discrediting; referring to a double perspective concealed in the term, in that there is a difference between the discredited – one who assumes their difference is known and the discreditable, or one who assumes their difference is not known or easily perceivable.

Elaborating further, he identifies three "grossly different types" (Goffman, p. 13); first, there are abominations of the body, next there are blemishes of individual character, and finally there are the tribal stigma of the race, nation, and religion. He also goes on to define those who are not stigmatized, stating that those who do not possess an undesired differentness, those who "do not depart negatively from the particular expectations at issue I shall call the normals" (Goffman, p. 5). Yet, this idea of "us" and "them" or the stigmatized vs. normals is taken for granted in Goffman's theorizing, and never problematized.

Nevertheless, Goffman's understanding, and its accompanying assumptions, has been widely used in the social sciences since the 1960's (Manzo, 2004),

initially by researchers in the symbolic interactionist tradition (Pontell, 2005)⁴. But it was also often adapted by sociologists in the structural-functional tradition, as it likewise fit their intellectual theorizing about the prominent role of social norms in societal deviance (Page, 1984). For this latter group, stigma is usually attached to supposed norm infractions which result in the devaluation of the person. Although this is a long way from the original Greek understanding, this functionalist idea is implicit in Goffman's conceptualization of stigma, as he certainly demarcates a distinction between the "stigmatized" and the "normals". Moreover, Goffman goes on to suggest, sometimes quite explicitly, that he is writing from the standpoint of the 'normals'.⁵

The apparent partiality in his standpoint⁶ did not prevent subsequent researchers from using (and perhaps abusing) the term. That is to say, this concept of 'stigma' was often used by sociologists in a rather uncritical fashion⁷. Manzo, as one of the pioneers of a sociological challenge to Goffman's much used notion of stigma, noted that the concept of stigma had received little critical theoretical attention since Goffman's original work. Yet, for him (2004)

⁴ This was not unusual at the time, as Goffman's somewhat enigmatic writings, were first seen as extensions of traditional 'symbolic interactionist' concerns with the self (albeit now re-framed in a dramaturgical direction).

⁵ However, he is also aware that this may generate problems. As he says, "by definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human...we exercise varieties of discrimination...we construct a stigma-theory, an ideology to explain his [sic] inferiority and account for the danger he [sic] represents" (1963, p. 5).

⁶ Acknowledged by Goffman himself (1963, p. 140).

⁷ For example, Manzo (2004) cites studies in relation to "gambling (Preston et al., 1998), being a welfare recipient (Rogers-Dillon, 1995), being a victim in a battering relationship (Fiene, 1995), being infertile (Whiteford and Gonzalez, 1995), having an abortion (Mendoza et al., 1999)" (p. 404) among many others, as examples of researchers using the term un-critically.

stigma is an element of sociologists' belief system: stigma is, for the practical purposes of doing sociology, an objective phenomenon the existence of which is presumed and which is deployed unreflectively for analytic and descriptive purposes (p. 410).

Manzo then goes on to argue that the concept has become "under-defined" and "over-used" in the social sciences. Whereas the term is widely used to describe any disreputable person or socially discredited group, the concept of stigma itself "remains a relatively imprecise concept" (Page, 1984, p.1). As a result, we have a situation whereby we find social scientists widely citing Goffman's somewhat broad definition but applying it with little critical analysis as to either its use or to its development as a concept. Fortunately, that situation has now changed, especially with regard to linking stigma to macro-structural factors.

That is to say, several academics have called for an analytic focus on the structural components of stigma. Their straightforward aim is to simply go beyond the theoretical imprecision which surrounds the concept. For some researchers, this has led to an emphasis on its conceptual clarification. For example, Link and Phelan (2001) put forth a conceptual model of stigma, acknowledging that its interworkings are made possible by the differential distribution of various types of power including social, economic, and political.

They outline five interrelated components, the convergence of which produces the pre-conditions necessary for their theorizing of stigma. First, people distinguish and label human differences. Second, dominant cultural beliefs link the labelled person to negative stereotypes. Third, labeled persons are categorized in terms of "us" and "them". Fourth, labeled persons experience

status loss and discrimination, leading to unequal outcomes. Finally, stigmatization is entirely contingent on “access to social, economic and political power that allows...elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination [to] co-occur in a power situation” (p. 367). They suggest that institutional racism provides one example of this relationship of stigma to power; yet, at the same time, they fail to fully unpack the origins of stigma or the social processes “that allow one group’s views to dominate so as to produce real and important consequences for the other group” (p. 378).⁸

Others have furthered Link and Phelan’s discussion by focusing on the ways in which the social processes named above function and operate. For example, Parker and Aggleton (2003) highlight the functions of stigmatization in relation to the establishment of social order and control, drawing on Foucault’s work (1978) regarding the relationship between culture or knowledge/power and notions of difference. Rather than focusing on the social construction of meaning through interaction, as Goffman had done, Foucault sought to understand how different forms of knowledge came to be constituted in distinct historical periods, and the relationship of that knowledge to power. While he researched in some of the same areas as Goffman (i.e. psychiatry and mental illness, prisons and criminals, sexology and sexual deviants), Foucault’s work “more clearly emphasized the cultural production of difference in the service of power” (Parker

⁸ This somewhat prescriptive conceptual model also fails to address stigma resistance, especially by marginalized populations who may not have access to traditional forms of political engagement.

and Aggleton, 2003, p. 17). Thus, for Foucault, stigma is not simply an isolated or interpersonal phenomenon, but rather is central to the constitution and maintenance of social order.

This line of inquiry has been expanded by Hannem (2012), who states that “Michel Foucault’s broader perspective on the production of truth, knowledge, and power provides a useful conceptual point of entry for thinking about the construction of stigma and its effects on individuals and groups” (p. 10). This conceptualization starts to address the criticism levelled at Goffman’s theory that it cannot address the origins of stigma, nor its structural components.

Hannem also moves beyond Link and Phelan’s conceptualization.

Structural discrimination, as conceived by Link and Phelan (2001) has no aspect of intent to harm or disgrace but results from a lack of careful forethought as to the consequences of bureaucratic policy or practice for particular population. Structural stigma, on the other hand is the result of a carefully calculated decision at an institutional or bureaucratic level to manage the risk that a particular population is perceived to present, either to themselves, to the institution or to society (Hannem, 2012, p. 24-5)

Hannem then seeks to use this Foucauldian post-structural perspective and integrate individual experiences into these macro-structures of power, so as to explore both the symbolic and structural aspects of stigma. Specifically, she uses Foucault’s concept of “the marginalized” (Hannem, 2012, p. 22) to go beyond Goffman, capturing the systemic subordination inherent in this concept. She concludes by reminding us that concentrating on micro-level interactions misses the structures of power and knowledge that inform stigma production; while focusing on the structural aspects of stigma “is to silence the voices and

lived experiences of those affected and marginalized by stigma” (p. 27). She suggests that detailed genealogies of various forms of stigma surrounding marginalized groups would be useful tools for challenging inequality. But she also acknowledges that Foucauldian analysis is in need of the fine-grained micro-interactionist approach that Goffmanian analysis provides. However, as the next section suggests, perhaps we need to go beyond Goffman both at the micro-level, as well as the macro level.

Situating the Research: Within Sociological Theorizations of Agency

As previously suggested, Goffman (1963) sometimes views stigma as membership in a socially constructed category of deviance – a socially discrediting attribute, behaviour, or reputation with the result that a person is understood, in some way, as ‘other’ (p. 3). Here, stigma is the subtle classification of a person into a group which is “other” than “normal”. While Goffman’s book does attend to the inter-personal relations that lead to a person being attributed a stigma, or labelled as stigmatized, its main concern, as its subtitle suggests, is with ‘the management of spoiled identity’. Thus, a concern with agency is obviously central to his book, and the chapters, themselves, are full of examples which demonstrate different forms of agentive response to stigma. Nevertheless, on closer inspection Goffman’s underlying understanding of ‘agency’ remains a limited one. To explain: Goffman began his career with the promotion of a ‘dramaturgical’ understanding of agency. In his first book “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” (1959) he proposed a theatrical understanding of ‘agency’, whereby the self ‘performs’ in everyday life, in ways

reminiscent of actors on a stage. Moreover, a dominant theme in this book is that of 'impression management', whereby everyday actors try to 'perform' so as to manage the 'impression' they want others to have of them. In many ways, Goffman's work on stigma builds on this notion of the self 'managing' situations to put themselves in a favourable light. The major difference, of course, is that much of "Stigma" is concerned with how the 'stigmatised' manage their interactions with 'normals'. In addition, however, Goffman is now explicitly, and frequently, adopting a specific research standpoint; the analytic perspective of 'we normals' (1963, p.5).

Yet this move from the study of 'impression management' to 'stigma management' is certainly well executed. Thus, Goffman begins by making a distinction between the 'discredited' and the 'discreditable' (1963, p.4); whereby the discredited is someone who assumes her/his difference is known about or immediately evident (eg Goffman cites the blind, the disabled, the hard of hearing, etc.); while the "discreditable" is someone who assumes her/his difference is not known or easily perceivable (eg Goffman cites homosexuals, criminals, sex workers, etc). For these two groups, Goffman proposes two broad categories for how these 'stigmatizeds' can agentively manage their stigma. So, whereas the discredited are mainly concerned with 'managing tension' (p. 42), the discreditable are primarily concerned with 'managing information' (p. 42).

Thus, the discredited may attempt to manage their stigma in ways such as the following. They may simply 'avoid' (p. 12) potential situations of contact with normals, or they may try and 'correct' (p. 9) their stigma (eg "when a physically

deformed person undergoes plastic surgery”, (p. 9). Alternatively, they may ‘cower’ (p. 17); (“when I go out, I cast down my eyes because I feel wholly inferior”, p. 17) or they may do the opposite and attempt “hostile bravado” (p. 17). However what unites many of these examples is that, for the discredited, these social situations “make for anxious unanchored interaction” (p. 18).

In contrast, the discreditable typically attempt to handle their stigma by trying to manage information. Here Goffman devotes a lot of time to the strategy of “passing” (p. 73-91), whereby the stigmatized seeks “to conceal crucial information about himself” (p. 74). Goffman provides the example of “a blind man wearing dark glasses sitting in a dark bar may be taken as a seeing person by a newcomer” (p. 74). Another frequently used strategy for ‘passing’ is for the stigmatized to partition their world into “forbidden, civil and back places” (p. 82), with the advantage that in these ‘back places’, individuals “find they need not try to conceal their stigma” (p. 81). In these places the stigmatized can relax a little; and Goffman provides a pertinent example – “carnivals provide physically handicapped employees with a world in which their stigma is relatively little an issue” (p. 81).

However, Goffman is not content with this demonstration of the agency involved in tension management and information control. In chapter 3, he attempts to examine the ‘stigmatised’ in terms of “the subjective sense of his own situation” (p. 105), what Goffman calls ‘ego-identity’ (p. 105-125). Goffman also understands that, in contemporary societies, this subjective sense is massively influenced by others. As a consequence, this influence forces Goffman to not

just consider the stigmatized individual, but to also “give special attention to the advice he is given regarding these matters” (p. 106), especially by professionals. Further, for Goffman, because a common feeling about stigma and its management is ‘ambivalence’ (p. 106-108), the stigmatized individual is frequently influenced by the advice these professionals offer. This professional advice is usually of two very different kinds. One approach suggests a political militancy, such that “professionals who take an in-group standpoint may advocate a militant and chauvinistic line” (p. 113): while the other approach “is not so much political... as it is psychiatric” (p. 115), and suggests that the stigmatized should help the ‘normals’. According to Goffman, the “normals really mean no harm, when they do it is because they don’t know better” (p. 116). Goffman’s discussion of ‘agency’, despite its breadth of examples and diversity of individuals, is concerned primarily with different strategies for ‘managing stigma’. Even within the analysis of the subjective sense of agency of the stigmatized Goffman tends to focus on the (oftentimes professional) groups who are trying to influence the actions of the stigmatized, rather than the agency of the stigmatized themselves.

Fortunately, these Goffmanian-influenced understandings of agency have been shown to be inadequate by a number of other sociological schools. For example, symbolic interactionists took Mead’s (1934) notion of the reflexive self seriously, and sought to develop a stronger, more processual understanding of the agentive self, and its agency in its own creation. This understanding could be applied to the stigmatized too. Thus, scholars like Becker (1953) applied the

Meadian conceptualization to show how individuals agentively formed themselves as drug users, via their social interactions, albeit not with 'normals'. In addition, ethnomethodologists developed a sense of agency which sought to build on the shared cultural competences and common-sense reasoning that 'ordinary' societal members routinely used. In the process, to take but one example, they were able to go beyond Goffman's 'passing' strategies. But crucially, Garfinkel (1967) did this by demonstrating the agentive sense of passing from the standpoint of the 'stigmatised', rather than that of the 'normals'. As a result, his study of Agnes nicely showed another dimension to passing; a dimension completely missed by Goffman, its artfulness and its moment by moment application.

Conversation analysts also contributed to more powerful understandings of agentive behavior. By focusing on the social organization of everyday social and linguistic interaction (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Sacks, 1974), rather than on any explicit theory of the self, conversation analysts were able to demonstrate the scope of agentive action that emerges, once one is culturally competent in a shared social 'grammar'. This approach was initially applied to the study of those whom Goffman would consider the 'stigmatized'. For example, early conversation analysts (Turner, 1974; Wieder, 1973) demonstrated how certain of the stigmatized (criminalized individuals, ex-mental patients) are quite capable of doing more than 'managing'. Turner showed how ex-mental patients 'snubbed' each other, while Wieder showed how criminalized individuals 'put down' 'normals' (including Wieder himself as a halfway house

employee/researcher). Finally, phenomenologists have demonstrated the 'subjective agency' which can be analysed when the researcher self-reflects on their own lived experience. Again, this can be utilized for the study of the stigmatized. For example, Michalko (1998), a researcher who also happens to be blind, has used phenomenological insights to document his own attempts at 'passing' as sighted.

All of these sociological schools of thought provide us with ways of going beyond the limitations of the Goffmanian understanding of agency.

Nevertheless, they all have been concerned, primarily, with understanding agency at the level of social interaction alone. They had little concern with linking that agentic analysis with questions at the macro-level. In contrast, early feminists (e.g. Dorothy Smith, 1974a; 1974b) not only insisted on the central role of women's 'subjectivity' as a means for going beyond the inadequacies of phenomenological and traditional, social scientific ways of theorizing 'agency', but also insisted on the need to relate individual subjective agency to macro-structural notions of power. In some regards, the work Smith inspired did allow the 'stigmatised' to challenge and resist what Link and Phelan suggested was 'structural discrimination'. For example, Smith (1987) herself was a 'single mother', Roxanna Ng (1987) was an 'immigrant woman', and George Smith (1990) was an 'HiV-infected gay man'. Their 'institutional ethnographic' studies not only began from their own agentic experience, but also examined the 'ruling relations' which caused them their problems. That is, they identified quite clearly what Link and Phelan (2001) would call the 'structural discrimination' that

they faced. This research was novel in that it began from the standpoint of those often identified by more traditional sociologists, as the 'stigmatised'. Yet, it still insisted on its ability to provide sociologically accurate results, because it not only made the 'ruling relations' visible, but it showed the ideological nature of much prior sociology, at the same time.

Some research has gone even further than this, arguing that our understanding of agency needs to go beyond the phenomenological foundations put forward by the ethnomethodologists and the institutional ethnographers. Miller has been a pioneer in this regard. By developing a radical and pioneering form of 'discourse analysis'⁹ combined with Foucauldian theorizing, she has produced a novel understanding of agency, as well as a theorization of politicality at the level of everyday, mundane interaction. Because her research (2000, 2003) pays close attention to routine talk and the forms of resistance within conversation, and because she insists on the importance of analyzing language inside rather than outside of its context of use, she is able to demonstrate the politicality that is inherent in the everyday talk of the "subaltern".

However Miller is no simple disciple of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis.¹⁰ She seeks to link up this attention to mundane discourse with

⁹ Although her analysis of mundane 'conversation' places her, methodologically, closer to the conversation analysts. However, the theoretical underpinning of her work is at complete variance to that of the conversation analysts.

¹⁰ In fact, her own background is in the "Analysis" school of Blum and McHugh, which began in 1970, with a powerful critique of ethnomethodology, for not attempting to get beyond surface descriptions of everyday utterances

Foucault's understanding of power/knowledge as discourse. Whereas institutional ethnography seeks to link up mundane talk with a Marxist-inspired concept of ruling relations, Miller's work goes further in looking to Foucault. She notes that Foucault shifts understandings of power away from properties of class and individuals to ways of saying and knowing (power/knowledge). Further whereas the Marxist-tradition routinely sees 'resistance' in terms of (class-related) struggles against (primarily economic and/or political) power, Miller insists that resistance to discursive power/knowledges also exists; because everyday talk and language is understood, by her, as "routinely, irremediably political" (p. 316).

This understanding of the politicality of all language has consequences at levels, other than the everyday. Specifically, Miller's work acknowledges that her use of Foucault (and of postmodernism more generally)

by rejecting all claims to privileged knowledge - widens, rather than narrows, the realm of 'the political', precisely by asking us to articulate the practical-moral agendas that authorize our claims about the world (Miller, 2000, p. 323).

Thus, hitherto 'privileged knowledges' are reconceptualised, because of her claim that all language is a claims-making enterprise. As a result, even scholarly writings are now to be understood as "political and moral, not empirical" (2000, p. 317). In other words, her version of Foucauldian discourse analysis holds that we know the world through the ways we have to speak about it, simultaneously rejecting the idea of a knowable truth outside of language.

More succinctly, she is using Foucault's theorizing about power/knowledge to say that relations of power are everywhere, even (or for her, especially) at the level of everyday talk (and of institutional discourses too). In this way, she gets beyond the micro/macro problem as outlined above by Hannem (2012), who was concerned with synthesizing Foucault with Goffman. In contrast, Miller synthesizes a Foucauldian macro with an interactionist 'discourse analysis'¹¹ – but, crucially, that 'discourse analysis' is itself embedded in relations of power at the micro level. So, by first claiming that relations of power are everywhere, and then by paying very careful attention to the routine talk of marginalized individuals through her discourse analysis, she is able to examine the political claims made within mundane talk. This idea that actors "do things"¹² with their talk" (Miller, 2000, p. 325) that are both strategic and political, is found in the way an account is crafted to respond to the demands of the setting, and to sometimes contest the settled order of things.

This categorization of everyday talk as a claims-making enterprise, and as a political and moral endeavour, also forces her to explicitly address the researcher's own situatedness within the claims-making field. That is to say, in the past, 'claims-making' was seen as something different than sociological

¹¹ In some ways, Miller's work initially appears as a variant on 'conversation analysis' because of its fine-grained analysis of instances of everyday talk (eg Sacks, 1974; Turner, 1974; Drew et al., 2001). But of course, Miller is not using a tacit Parsonian macro-framework and analyzing the underlying 'orderliness' of social life, she, instead, is prioritizing how everyday speakers challenge everyday 'orderliness'.

¹² Of course, the implicit reference here is to Austin's (1962) pioneering work in 'ordinary language philosophy' that was foundational for much of the later work in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis.

theorizing and study. Sociologists might study 'claims-making' but they themselves were carrying out 'social scientific research'. What Miller introduces into the debate is the Foucauldian-inspired assertion that social science also constitutes itself as a 'claims-making endeavour'; one that primarily operates by making claims regarding the truth (of the science to which they subscribe). Miller is simply pointing out the political and moral foundations of that endeavour, what Foucault understands as the 'will to truth' (Foucault, 1972).

Thus, one might see Miller, herself, as "talking back" to both scientific discourses and certain feminist discourses which focus on truth-seeking forms of analysis.¹³ Because, for her, her focus is quite different. She is engaged in a form of analysis which looks at the work that language does, the claims-making that goes on, and the resistance(s) embedded therein. Furthermore, she fully understands the implication of this Foucauldian stance for her own research practices. For her, she (2000) forcefully argues that one can reject the traditional 'story' of science, as postmodernism counsels, without giving up on the possibility of critical social inquiry.

The very distinction between scientific and other ways of knowing (typically discredited as prejudice, ignorance and myth) is itself a discursive strategy meant to legitimate the perspective of society's dominant group at the expense of the marginalized (p. 318).

¹³ It should be pointed out here that the later Foucault did indeed try to get beyond this Millerian understanding of the 'poverty of truth-telling' (Miller 2000). That is to say, Foucault in his last lecture at the college de France (2010, 2011) proposed 'parrhesia' as a mechanism for speaking truth to power. See Doran (2015) for additional insight into 'parrhesia'.

But she certainly is not content, in any way, to embrace a free-floating relativism, as a result.

Instead, she asks, “What is the possibility of critical social inquiry once the supports of science and the scientific method have been cut away?” (p. 315). To that rhetorical question, she has a powerful answer. Her solution is that scholars (whether they be feminists, postmodernists or other critical scholars) would benefit enormously, by broadening their view of language/discourse to include the in-depth examination of language-in-use. This discursive perspective offers scholars (feminists, postmodernists, etc.) something quite unique and distinctive: an emphasis on the analysis of ordinary talk itself as a mechanism for agentive action, and for the analysis of the agonistic struggles between everyday discourses and institutional ones.

Miller then goes on to clarify the significant difference between her perspective, and that of other researchers engaged in what often gets called ‘critical social inquiry’. That is, she is also challenging researchers, such as Dorothy Smith (1987) who argue that in order to act politically and change what is, we must know the Truth about the social world.¹⁴ Oftentimes, these forms of theorizing have focused on the contrast they construct between ideological and true (scientific) knowledge and have replaced “the privileged standpoint of science with other equally privileged standpoints from which Truth can supposedly be

¹⁴ Such theorists typically see the linguistic turn in the social sciences as a shift away from political engagement and believe that critical social inquiry must remain a truth-seeking exercise.

glimpsed” (Miller, 2000, p. 320). Their interest in the marginalized person is as a better Truth-teller, wherein the “alternative foundational knowledges are intended to function - like science - as the arbiter of true and false accounts of the world” (p. 321). However this precludes the possibility of political critique actually within language. Instead theorists like Smith and the other institutional ethnographers, for example, reject the modernist methodology for carrying out social scientific inquiry (cf Smith, 1974b) but are, nevertheless, still aligned with the modernist goal of a true account of social reality. For Miller this is an impoverished way of carrying out research.

Instead, Miller (2000) advocates for a move away from Truth-seeking, via efforts to develop an emancipatory project within a postmodernist framework. She states that “the discursive perspective offers feminist postmodernists a more profoundly politicized version of inquiry, and of the inquirer as well” (p. 324). The real problem for Miller is that truth-seeking feminist theorists depoliticize the subject as their “realist interpretation reduces speakers to passively reporting on the world, rather than actively struggling to shape it in the course of their talk” (p. 327). This theoretical move also depoliticizes the theorist or researcher, who is seen as only seeking to engage in a form of analysis restricted to determining the truth-value of accounts. In contrast, the post-truth-seeking theorist can focus on the strategy of the talk, and on the complex and multifaceted ways in which power and ideology are taken up and exploited by ‘underdogs’ in their agentive,

verbal resistance¹⁵. As Miller (2000) points out, a further strength of her approach “lies in the way it vividly demonstrates – rather than simply asserts – the poverty of a truth-seeking model of analysis. It shows that how we construct the world in language counts” (p. 332).

Moreover, as Garfinkel (1967) demonstrated many years ago with Agnes’s discursive construction of ‘sexuality’, lay people also know that linguistic categories (e.g. of a binary understanding of gender) can also be used strategically. Categories can be artfully played with, changed, and transformed through an individual’s (linguistic and other) practices. Just as Garfinkel showed that actors, like Agnes, are “practical, rule-using analysts” (Atkinson and Drew, 1979, p. 22) who strategically play with conventional discursive classifications and categories, in their everyday lives, when it suits their practical ends, we must also be alert to the possibility of the contemporary ‘stigmatised’ being equally strategic. It is Miller who has pushed this ethnomethodological insight, in this interesting direction. She posits that if we view language-use strategically, or examine language for its claims-making value, rather than its descriptive value, this opens up a whole new world of understanding how ‘underdogs’ (her

¹⁵ This line of inquiry intersects with the concerns of this project in a multitude of fashions: firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the somewhat moralistic views of sex work, against which this project operates, are founded on an assumed conceptualization about the inherent nature of sex work as ultimately harmful not only to sex workers, but to all women (see Publication Two). Yet, the very premise of this argument is rendered moot by Miller’s discussion on the poverty of truth seeking. In relation to the theoretical pillars of this dissertation, the “widening of the political” has implications for the theorizing of “talk back” and of the agency of individuals in relationship to stigma. This relationship is examined via the resistance of sex workers to stigma.

word for members of marginalized groups) operate in their everyday worlds (Miller, 2003).

To demonstrate her argument, Miller (2000) uses the example of a young girl (Joanne) in a school yard who climbed into a treehouse that was previously for “boys only”. Once there, she starts to throw debris from the treehouse down on top of the boys, preventing them from climbing up. When she is reprimanded by the teacher, she calls out from the treehouse that she is “just cleaning the floor”. Here, Miller highlights the fact that by “sweeping”, the girl is positioning the space of the treehouse as home, a place where young women belong. By claiming that her aggressive behaviour was “just sweeping”, she is redefining it as “women’s work”, using the fact that she is female (that which kept her out of the tree house in the first place) to reframe her resistance as a “gender appropriate” activity. More importantly, Miller understands this redefinition as an enactment of power, rather than a passive report of Joanne’s activities. Of course, she fully understands that her reading is only a “candidate reading” (as the conversation analysts would say), but she is not only drawing attention to “the multiplicity of the world” (Miller, 2000, p. 322) and its meanings, she is also drawing attention to how resistance can be framed in what may appear to be simple acts of description.

Miller (2000) also notes that her formulation of the treehouse episode is a feminist one, understood against a background of issues, such as the subordination of women and the strategies of subaltern groups. This is an important clarification, because she claims, resistance by subordinate groups

often happens in indirect and politically careful ways - power from the underside is not immediately recognizable, and requires an artful analysis, to appreciate the strategies used by 'underdogs' like Agnes (Garfinkel 1967) and Joanne (Miller, 2000).

Hopefully we now have a much better understanding of how researchers might advance well beyond Goffman's inadequate theorizing on stigma. That is, at the macro level, one can move beyond Goffman's nebulous notion of stigma with its relation to the Greeks and the normals; and one can move, instead, to Hannem's more sophisticated notion of 'structural stigma'. Similarly, one can also move beyond Goffman's inadequate notion of stigma management, and now examine the possibilities that individuals may not be simply managing 'stigma' but may be employing 'underdog strategies' to challenge, resist and name 'structural stigma'. However, it is still unclear whether or not these general mechanisms for going beyond Goffman theoretically are suitable for the actual empirical analysis of 'sex work.' That decision must wait until we have taken a closer look at recent research in the specific field of 'sex work stigma'.

Situating the Research: Within the sex work stigma literature

Although sex work stigma was initially treated in a Goffmanian fashion by those researchers examining sex work from the perspective of the 'normals' (Jeffreys, 2010) with the emergence of feminist sociology, that perspective was powerfully challenged. For example, Pheterson, in her influential and pioneering text "The Whore Stigma: Female Dishonour and Male Unworthiness" (1986) gets at the contents of sex work stigma, comparing them to the actual realities of sex work.

Thus, she outlines the many ways in which sex work goes against gendered norms of honour/dishonour, including having sex with strangers, asking a fee for sex, having sex with multiple partners, amongst others (Bell, 1987; Chapkis, 1997; Rubin, 1999). The more important point is that this research is not undertaken from the perspective of the 'normals' but rather, from the standpoint of sex worker. Powerful re-orientation of the field is not only crucial but has been continued by many subsequent researchers.¹⁶

In fact, there has emerged a growing literature that does, indeed, seek to prioritize the voices (based on their lived experience) of sex workers (Agustin, 2007; Bernstein, 2002; Boris et al., 2010; Brents and Hausbeck, 2007; Chapkis, 1997; Frank, 1998; Hoang, 2010; Lindemann, 2011; O'Connell Davidson, 1998; Ocha and Earth, 2013; Read, 2013; Sanders, 2006; Scoular, 2004; Smith, 2017; van der Veen, 2001; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001; Weitzer, 2000) and a portion of that research has occurred in Canada (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Benoit & Shaver, 2006; Brock, 1998; Bruckert, Parent, & Robitaille, 2003; Ferris, 2015; Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006b; Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000; Lewis, Maticka-Tyndale, Shaver & Schramm, 2005; Lowman, 2001; Lowman &

¹⁶ The issue of who gets to speak within sex work research is an important one, as whether or not research contributes to or combats sex work stigma is predicated upon whose voices are prioritized within the conversation (Lowthers et al, 2017). An early example in Canada can be traced back to the 80's, with Bell's book "Good Girls, Bad Girls: Sex Trade Workers and Feminists Face to Face" (1987). The book is comprised of a number of papers, from a conference entitled "Changing our images: the politics of prostitution and pornography" held in Toronto in 1985; there are many lessons in that work, including the necessity of including the voice of lived experience in any discussion about sex work. There was, in many cases, a dismissal of the experience of sex workers by feminists who were advocating for their own concerns about sex work without much prioritization of the viewpoints of people with lived experience.

Atchison, 2006; O'Doherty, 2007; PIVOT, 2006; Ross, 2000, Shannon et al., 2008; Shaver, 1994).

Furthermore, a number of specifically Canadian sex work researchers have embraced this idea that sex workers' own interpretations of their experiences should be at the nexus of research (Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Bruckert, Parent, & Robitaille, 2003; Comte, 2014; Jeffrey & MacDonald; 2006a; Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000; Lewis et al., 2005; Lowman, 2000; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2005; Shaver et al., 2011; van der Meulen, 2011; van der Meulen, Durisin & Love, 2013;).¹⁷ This work has been exemplary in foregrounding issues important to sex workers, including the impact of stigma in their lives and work.

Indeed, the majority of sex work stigma literature is now dominated by research exploring the impacts of that stigma. That is, it is no longer research from the top-down perspective of what Goffman called the 'normals'. In certain respects, it aims to uncover features of the 'structural discrimination' that Link and Phelan proposed, but with specific reference to the discriminations faced in the field of sex work. Generally speaking, this literature can be divided into two, somewhat flexible, categories; research concerning health and public health, and research on social impacts, especially with regards to social exclusion and social policy.

¹⁷ Benoit and Shaver (2006) state that more work is required regarding the personal lives of sex workers, as "they often still appear as one-dimensional, rather than as people whose work represents only one part of their multi-faceted lives" (p. 246).

In terms of the impacts of stigma on health, the idea of sex work stigma as a barrier to health care has been widely researched. For example, in studies of street-based sex workers in Vancouver (Lazarus et al. 2012), researchers found that “occupational stigma remained significantly and independently associated with increased barriers to health access... irrespective of individuals’ demographics, social and work environment factors” (p. 145). For them, stigma creates poor access to health services and negative health outcomes because of it. Specifically, the authors discussed issues such as discrimination by health care professionals, as well as participants’ unwillingness to disclose their involvement in sex work due to fear of arrest, negative past experiences with disclosure, etc. as creating barriers to accessing appropriate health care. In response to stigma’s obstruction of health-seeking behaviours by sex workers, more recent research has found a need for health professions to learn to serve women engaged in sex work in ways that take into account the barriers created by sex work stigma (Benoit et al., 2019). Similar findings have occurred in India, with Ryan et al. (2019) highlighting structural stigma in health care systems.

A broad sub-section of investigation within the health-related impacts of sex work stigma globally has been research related to HIV. Research in the Dominican Republic has looked at factors associated with sex work stigma along domains of community and family, and the impacts for interventions focused on HIV prevention (Rael, 2015). As well, Padilla et al. (2008) have explored the intersections of stigma, social inequality and HIV risk disclosure among Dominican male sex workers. In Thailand, the public health impacts of

sex work stigma have been found to include stigma as a barrier to HIV/AIDS treatment (Mutchler, 2004) for male sex workers. This finding of sex work stigma as a barrier to HIV/AIDS treatment has been replicated in the cities of London, Bangkok and Kolkata (Scambler and Poli, 2008) for women engaged in sex work.

Furthering this focus on stigma and health, Orchard et al. (2019) explored spatialized notions of health, stigma, power and subjectivity among women in street sex work. Their social mapping explored how street-based sex workers “think about and navigate their social-spatial experiences related to service provision, violence and places they avoid to protect themselves from danger or stigmatizing encounters” (p. 489). This research builds on the discussion around stigma as a barrier to health care by unpacking the interaction between sex work, drug use, health, space, stigma and service provision; thus, making explicit that stigma is experienced differently by women who also use drugs (Sallmann, 2010). Benoit et al. (2015) expand on this discussion in their exploration of the ways in which stigma mediates part of the link between sex work and drug use. They note that Goffman's work assumes that members of a deviant group are, by definition, stigmatized equally when in reality, the situation more closely approximates a “web of stigmatization” (p. 447) which necessitates looking at other factors such as experiences of poverty, abuse, lack of education, etc.

Indeed, the idea of the intersection of various forms of stigma is another subsection of the sex work stigma literature (Levey and Pinsky, 2015). This

literature points to the fact that sex workers occupy different social locations, which may mean that they experience multiple and intersecting forms of stigma (Scambler, 2007). For example, in Europe, work has occurred at the intersections between disability stigma and sex work stigma, especially as an interesting space for alliance between sex workers' rights and the rights of people with disabilities (Geymonat, 2019). The intersection between sex work stigma and the stigma experienced by men who identify as homosexual has been explored in Canada (Morrison and Whitehead, 2007) and the United States (Koken et al., 2004), with evidence in the latter study pointing to the normalization of sex work in the gay community as a protective factor against stigma. Trans sex workers have also been found to experience compounding stigmas related to their trans identity and sex work, as in research in Southeast Asia, where those involved identified as "ladyboys" (Davis et al., 2019) and were at the intersection of multiple forms of stigma. Krusi et al. (2016) found that the increased violence experienced by trans sex workers as a result of lack of police protection was also mediated by racism and economic barriers, pointing to the importance of exploring differences in social location and forms of oppression as they relate to the impacts of stigma.

Research on intersecting stigmas has also explored sex workers' private relationships; in Northern Mexico, the male partners of female sex workers were largely viewed as pimps, due to the intersection of stigma attached to unconventional gender roles, especially with regards to economic or earner roles within the relationship (Mittal et al., 2018). This research explored the

ways in which those intersecting stigmas spilled over into the everyday social interactions of sex workers and their intimate partners. Overall, research on the intersections of various forms of stigma points to the fact that sex work stigma cannot be viewed in isolation, and researchers must attend to the causal role of social structures in shaping both sex work stigma as well as other forms of stigma sex workers may experience.

Conversely, another area of research within the sex work stigma literature has flipped this relationship and examined the causal role of sex work stigma on social institutions such as the laws surrounding the sex industry. Largely, the impact of stigmatizing laws has been the social exclusion of sex workers, a dominant trend running through the literature on workers in the sex trade both within Canada and around the globe (Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998).

Sanchez (2004) provides an example of social exclusion related to law in her discussion of the prostitution free zone¹⁸ in Portland, Oregon, which excludes sex workers from certain areas of the city, keeping sex-workers out through by-law enforcement. Further, not only are sex workers socially and physically excluded from community on the basis of regulations founded on the stigma associated with their work, but that stigma also impacts the re-integration of

¹⁸ In the prostitution free zone initiative, when sex workers are arrested for soliciting they are released on the condition that they not enter any of the so-called high-vice areas of the city, as outlined by police; those who are found in these areas have subsequent charges laid upon them, the severity of which far outweigh the original charges of soliciting. Banning sex workers from the main streets of the city, reflects "the assumption that street workers are alienated strangers who could not possibly live in the area" (Sanchez, 2004, p. 869). This forcing of sex workers to carry out daily life within certain parameters calls into question basic human rights, and in fact is rooted in the stigmatizing idea that sex workers do not have lives outside of the work they engage in.

individuals who leave the industry¹⁹. Ex-sex workers are re-incorporated in the social body by “assimilating them within the space of the family”, they are reinstated “not as citizens within the city – but within the private sphere of pre-political life” (Pratt, 2005, p. 1062). This phenomenon can be seen in the common use of the term “somebody’s daughter” in campaigns to arouse public sympathy for sex workers. Even former sex workers feel the social exclusion associated with sex work stigma, as evidenced by the experiences of sex workers in Vancouver attempting to transition out of the sex industry into other work (Bowen, 2015).

The social exclusion of sex workers as a result of stigma has also been researched in the form of the moral panic surrounding the occupation. “Moral panics are characterised by a sequence of events where a person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values” (Hubbard et al., 2008, p. 137). In some cases, techniques of state-sponsored governmentality and surveillance have been used to contain, exclude, or control sex workers on the assumption that they threaten social cohesion (Bruckert and Hannem, 2013). In one Canadian example, in Toronto in the early 1980’s, moral panics about sex work were both rampant and rooted in stigma, as sex workers were seen as immoral women who spread disease and decay wherever they went. The moral panic, “which the police themselves helped to produce,

¹⁹ Even having left the industry, the sex worker (now occupying the stigmatized social position of ex-sex worker, or a woman reformed from her previous life of indiscretions) is still not included as a full citizen and community member.

legitimated the more intensified policing of prostitutes, with the courts and the media acting in concert” (Brock, 1998, p. 39). These moral panics have “implicated prostitutes in outbreaks of deviance, disease, or deprivation” (Hubbard et al., 2008, p. 137), and often impact both the laws surrounding sex work, as well as the enforcement of such laws; as Hubbard et al state, “legislation intended to deal with the ‘problem’ of prostitution has been widely interpreted as reactive to national panics about the visibility of prostitution in certain spaces at particular times” (p. 138). When new laws are enacted, they often also amplify sex work stigma because laws which result from the moral panic brought on by the interpretation of prostitution as a “social problem” are extremely ambiguous and create a position where the sex worker is neither inside, nor outside of the law.²⁰

Research surrounding the relationship between sex work stigma and the law has largely explored regulation and enforcement at the level of street-based sex work (Hail-Jares et al, 2017). Further to this, it has been argued that the varied circumstances and settings in which sex work occur should shape policy approaches, rather than stigma, and that policy and state discourses largely fail to reflect the diverse experiences of sex workers (Pitcher, 2019). These finding

²⁰ Other examples of stigma inherently embedded in laws around sex work can be seen around the globe. In France, one example is the anti-crime law, that in the name of ‘security’ criminalizes what is called ‘passive soliciting’. While couched as a means of protecting women from trafficking and prostitution, the law means, for instance, that “any woman whose dress or attitude gives the impression that she is soliciting money for sex can face both a fine and extended jail time” (Ticktin, 2005, p. 353). Crucially, the term ‘passive soliciting’ is defined in such a way that the police have the power to determine what behaviours constitute ‘soliciting’ since it is defined as passive, not active. Stigma is inherent in this: the idea that sex workers dress a certain way, or act a certain way, is used as the basis for arrest.

have been reaffirmed in Scotland, where further stigma, exclusion and marginalization of sex workers as well as access challenges for services providers have been the result of sex work policies founded on stigma (Smith, 2015); thus, there is a need for approaches which consider a variety of sex worker perceptions and experiences in order to sustain positive social and political change. Even fiscal policies have been found to reinforce sex work stigma, painting sex workers as lesser citizens and have been critiqued as part of the social governance of sex workers (Crowhurst, 2019).

The literature has, in various ways, concerned itself with the effects of sex work stigma on the civic exclusion of sex workers (Bruckert and Hannem, 2013), as well as focusing on the impact of stigma on sex work laws and the way the industry is regulated, as evidenced in Canadian research (Lewis, J., and Maticka-Tyndale, 2000; Lowman, 2005; Shaver, 1994). The placement of the sex worker in a subordinate social position has a long history (Bell, 1994), and this history of subordination has culminated in legal geographies that render people who do sex work visible to the state and law, yet stripped of rights as worker citizens (Sanchez, 2004). Work that places the testimony of people involved in the sex trade at the nexus of the research has provided in-depth understandings regarding the ways in which stigma has informed laws meant to regulate and eradicate the selling of sex and the commodification of the body (Sanders, 2018a; Hubbard, Matthews, and Scoular, 2008; Ticktin, 2005). Further to this, the intersection of stigma and criminalization has largely been

found to render sex workers at increased risk for violence (Krusi et al., 2016; Lowman, 2011; PIVOT, 2006).

In Canada, the link between sex work laws and violence against sex workers has been researched (Durisin, 2010; Ferris, 2015); however, recent research in the decriminalized context of New Zealand has found that even in those settings where laws are not founded on stigma, stigma continues to have a negative impact (Armstrong, 2019). Those impacts are particularly felt by street-based sex workers, as deeply ingrained stigma has been found to be a major barrier to addressing violence against sex workers, especially at the street level (Able et al., 2010; Armstrong, 2019). Further to this, sex work stigma has been shown to increase victim blaming for women who have experienced sexual violence (Sprankle et al., 2018), showing the pervasiveness of the ways in which stigma mediates experiences of and responses to violence experienced by sex workers.

In terms of responses to violence, the stigma associated with sex work has been well researched in terms of police responses, with the high profile case of a serial murderer in Canada who targeted sex workers providing just one example of police inattentiveness and lack of response to violence experienced by sex working women (Pratt, 2005). Women began to go missing from the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver in 1978; the media and the police were oddly inattentive. It was not until a 1998 murder—roughly 69 murders later—that they began to pay attention (Pratt, 2005). The fact that the women were sex workers meant that the police failed to investigate their disappearances, in some cases

for over twenty years (Ferris, 2007; Lowman, 2000; PIVOT, 2006); the missing women of Vancouver's Downtown East Side are a prime example of the lack of police protection available to people who do sex work as a result of stigma (Lowman, 2000).

As we have seen, the literature on sex work stigma has been expansive in recent decades, and it has produced many powerful, empirical findings. Although much of this research has focussed on the empirical, a few researchers have tried to develop this work with regard to a more sophisticated understanding of sex work stigma, by linking it to structural concerns.

Thus, some research has attempted to link stigma with the more general social control of individuals, especially of women's sexuality (Bowen and Bungay, 2016; Hallgrimsdottier et al 2008). Other research, through the examination of the role of relations of class, command (state authority), gender and ethnicity (Scambler, 2007) and the law (Weitzer, 2012), has also tried to move the analysis of (sex work) stigma to a more structural level. That is, instead of analyzing the outcomes of stigma, or the impacts of stigma on the lives of individuals, this area of research has undertaken an analysis of the concept of stigma in terms of how it operates in a broader sense, with a focus on society as a whole rather than in individuals' experiences.

More recently, an ambitious article by Benoit et al. (2018) attempted to link up this structural stigma with the world of the everyday (and with an intermediate – meso-level, as well). Although their specific aim was to explore the effects of

stigma on the working conditions, lives and health of sex workers, they also sought to connect these three levels of analysis. That is to say, they named sex worker stigma as a fundamental cause of social inequality, but went on to examine the sources of sex worker stigma at macro levels such as the laws and media, meso levels such as the institutions of the health care and justice systems, and micro levels such as the public and other sex workers. Although their main focus was the structural elements of 'sex work stigma' they did conclude with a discussion of the different techniques that sex workers "agentively use to manage, reframe or resist the disadvantages stigma imposes on them" (2018, p. 458). As this dissertation is primarily concerned with this agentive side of sex work (and how sex workers themselves identify 'structural stigma'), it is also necessary that we now turn to an examination of how scholarship on sex work agency regarding stigma has developed.

Sex Worker Agency, Stigma and Resistance

Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the research on individual responses to stigma has used the original notion of stigma management as proposed by Goffman (1963). That is to say, this research has mainly focussed on the ways in which sex workers have managed their "spoiled identities". These strategies of stigma management have been found to include role play (Abel, 2011), coping strategies in the workplace (Koken, 2012), the use of humour (Sanders, 2004), depersonalization (Vanwesenbeeck, 2006), and dual role management (Haegar, 2009). Further work has explored emotion work as a form of stigma management in female sex workers' long-term intimate relationships in South

Africa (Murphy et al., 2015). Sex worker academics in Australia have discussed stigma management in terms of strategies to protect privacy, manage stress, and keep a long-term secret from loved ones and colleagues, due to the sometimes “closeted nature” of sex work (Blissbomb, 2010). In the Netherlands, depersonalization as a strategy of stigma management has been found to be used by both sex workers and nurses in a comparative study of the burn out experienced by people working in either profession (Vanwesenbeeck, 2006).

Further to this, research with Canadian men who do sex work has found that they experience significant enacted stigma²¹ with negative outcomes for social supports and maintenance of personal relationships (Jiao & Bungay, 2019).

These outcomes have been shown to negatively impact mental health; however, the same research showed that the male sex workers counter this by engaging in stigma management techniques such as avoidance.

Yet not all researchers have confined themselves to the analysis of ‘stigma management’. Bruckert (2012) acknowledges the use of traditional strategies of stigma management, yet she also points out, in the conclusion to her work, that “how stigma is experienced, negotiated, resisted, and/or managed is highly variable, subjective, and conditioned by material, social, personal, and discursive resources” (p. 75). Furthermore, she points to the importance of both

²¹ As Herek (2007) states, enacted stigma refers to the “overt behavioral expressions” of others, including shunning, ostracism, and discrimination. (Cited in Jiao & Bungay, 2019, p. 641). This is in contrast to felt or internalized stigma, which have more to do with expectations that stigma will occur, or perceptions of stigma as part of self-concept, respectively.

the social location and the relative privilege of individual sex workers in their relationship to stigma. So, her recognition of this variance in the experiences of stigma constitutes one promising step forward.

Yet questions over what constitutes resistance, rather than management, have been raised explicitly in recent years. For example, the journal *Sexualities* published a lively discussion on the topic of resistance to sex work stigma in 2018. It consisted of an article by Weitzer (2018), along with three responses to it (Chapkis, 2018; Phoenix, 2018; Sanders, 2018b), and generated much debate. The initial article by Weitzer differentiated between stigma resistance at the *individual level*, which included forms such as defining sex work as a profession²², and resistance at the *societal level*, which he discussed as that which “may help to enlighten the public and generate greater support for sex workers’ demands” (2018, p. 724).²³ Weitzer rightly criticized Goffman’s concept of stigma for focusing on the ways in which individuals cope with and manage rather than defy or resist stigma; but then went on to state that the sex work literature had failed to focus on examples where sex workers “actively resisted expressions of prejudice and outright discrimination in face-to-face encounters or collectively as members of organizations that seek to change popular attitudes and public policies” (p. 4).

²² Weitzer believes that individual resistance is apolitical, existing solely at the psychological level, and has no potential to impact stigma reduction/change.

²³ The current research is defining resistance differently, in that the discursive resistance of ‘talking back’ (see quote by Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006a), cited on page 11 of this dissertation), seen by Weitzer as apolitical, is conceptualized here (via Miller, 2000) as inherently political, and intimately tied to institutionalized power structures.

Not surprisingly perhaps, Chapkis (2018) took issue with this assertion, arguing his statement was true

only if we disregard more than 30 years of feminist, queer, and critical race theory - written both by sex work activists and by more conventionally credentialed scholars - analyzing whore stigma and proposing strategies to resist, subvert and undermine it (p. 743).

Thus, Chapkis situated resistance primarily in those critical texts which produced strategies for resistance. Further to this, Phoenix criticized Weitzer for failing to recognize the intersectional nature of stigma, citing the interworking of social power as that which differentiates between the levels and types of stigma experienced by sex workers. Sanders also contributed to that criticism, stating “when thinking how to resist, the intersections of stigma and other identity politics are important to consider” (2018b, p. 737).²⁴

The same year, Benoit et al (2018) took this discussion of resistance a step further, and situated it primarily not in texts, but in collective action by sex workers and their allies. For them, resistance can be found at the level of some form of community political action (pp. 466-7). In other words, resistance is only understood in the traditional terms of overt political action not in the actions of single individuals.

²⁴ In many respects, my aim in this dissertation is to shed light on some of the issues raised in this debate and hopefully clarify certain of the points raised in that exchange. But my aim is not so much to carry this out by research that suggests new ways to resist (ways which may, perhaps, been missed by researchers like Weitzer), but rather to show empirically, that sex workers are already resisting, and they are routinely doing this in their everyday talk and actions.

Yet resistance may well be found in the actions of individuals (Shdaimah & Leon, 2015). For example, we find this type of resistance in the writings by individuals who are both sex workers and academics. Their standpoint as both sex workers and academics is an integral part of their analysis. For example, Love, in her (2013) research, outlines her own lived experiences in sex work, her changing interpretation of those experiences and the impact this has had on her sense of self. Within that article she talks back to more traditional views of sex work and speaks to her own sex work as a form of resistance. In other words, she is putting forward a much more sophisticated understanding than that of simply 'managing' a stigmatized identity, as she names the ways in which all parts of her experience impact who she is, and expands definitions of resistance to include engaging in sex work as a form of resistance in and of itself. At the same time, she is demonstrating through her embodied activity, that resistance may exist outside of the realms of conventional political understandings.

This type of resistance is what this dissertation seeks to explore. In other words, the argument of this research is that perhaps one can find resistance at the level of individual, and not just collective, action. It is Miller's theorising that enables us to pursue such a suggestion. Because she has uncovered 'underdog strategies' in the mundane talk of the marginalised, this approach can perhaps be applied, quite specifically, to the everyday interactions of sex workers. Thus, resistance may now be seen not just at the level of scholarly texts proposing action, or of community groups organizing politically, but also at the level of

mundane talk as well. In addition, Miller's analysis, because it is critical of 'truth-seeking sociologies' can also show us ways of getting beyond the limitations of certain types of feminist scholarship which seek the truth of (female) sex workers by producing them as passive, not active, and portraying them simply as 'victims'. For example, radical feminism's insistence that its truth discloses the victim status at the heart of (female) sex work can now be challenged, by the Foucauldian element within Miller's work, which allows us to see this assertion, instead, as demonstrating radical feminism's 'will to truth'. As a result, one can now focus very carefully on mundane talk, so as to demonstrate how the everyday agency of sex workers' resistance gets displayed, even when that talk might be 'resisting' the efforts by some professionals (and their discourses) to 'help' them.

Preface: Chapter Two

Chapter Two provides an overview of the methodological journey undertaken for this research. It chronicles the development of a novel and unique research methodology, which provides for a 'mixed methods'²⁵ approach; but one that is located firmly within the qualitative research tradition. It also demonstrates the intellectual journey traversed by this researcher, in moving from the traditional 'academic' standpoint of being an observer from outside the community being studied, to a newer hybrid 'standpoint' of academic/activist. It seeks to show the methodological benefits that have accrued from this journey, as well as the issues confronted along the way.

This journey involved a movement from an initial starting point in traditional qualitative methods (typically informed by symbolic interactionist theorizing), to Participatory Action Research (typically informed by feminist theorizing), and finally to Miller's unique form of discourse analysis (informed by Foucauldian-feminist theorizing). Each step in this process brought with it, methodological benefits. The first step allowed for pertinent demographic information to be obtained from the sex workers studied. Step two allowed for typically backgrounded issues of trust and power to be handled in a more satisfactory manner, than is usually accomplished in much qualitative research. Step three, with its detailed analysis of everyday language use, allowed me to demonstrate

²⁵ Traditionally, a 'mixed-methods' approach combines quantitative and qualitative analysis. This dissertation differs in that it combines two very different types of 'qualitative methods'.

certain of the conversational strategies used by sex workers to 'talk back' to relationships of power. Moreover, this chapter sets the stage for Chapter Three to follow, which actually shows the powerful insights to be gathered from the application of this 'qualitative mixed methods' approach.²⁶

²⁶ This chapter is not published.

Chapter Two: A Methodological Journey: Developing a Qualitative “Mixed Methods” Approach

One of the biggest challenges to building bridges between sex workers and researchers is the large ideological disjuncture in conceptualizations of prostitution. This divide, in turn, informs methodological practice (van der Meulen, 2011, p. 379).

Introduction

Although the sociological study of stigma has typically been researched using conventional qualitative methods²⁷ (Link and Phelan, 2001), because this dissertation is concerned with the stigma associated with sex work, it has ended up going well beyond its initial starting point in such methods. Specifically, it has gone on to explore the utility of several forms of participatory action research, before finally discovering the practical and theoretical applicability of Miller’s feminist discourse analysis.

As noted earlier, initially, this project followed Jeffrey and MacDonald’s approach on sex work in the Maritimes, namely by carrying out qualitative interviews. In the course of my research, however, other more specifically appropriate methodologies were subsequently explored. Thus, participatory action research, with its emphasis on research with specific actionable results, appeared attractive at one point, especially as a major aim of this research project was not simply to describe sex work stigma but also to help lessen its deleterious effects. However, on further inspection, I discovered that it was

²⁷ Typically informed by the symbolic interactionist tradition.

community action research (CAR) specifically, rather than participatory action research (PAR) more generally, that, most directly, addressed the specific methodological issues (regarding trust and power differentials) that I was encountering in my own research. Yet, despite CAR's potential utility for my research, the actual practical difficulties involved in carrying out research in St. John's meant that such a strategy could not be easily employed.²⁸ Fortunately, Miller's (2000) theoretical/methodological form of discourse analysis allowed me, as a researcher, to satisfactorily resolve these issues.

Thus, this chapter will show this methodological journey with regards to my development of suitable methods for this research. Part one will discuss the conventional qualitative methods that were my starting point. Part two will then show the greater suitability of the feminist-inspired research methods (PAR and CAR) mentioned above. While the third and final section will show how Miller's feminist discourse analysis actually resolves certain of the issues addressed by CAR, but accomplishes this task in the absence of community-based organizations, and thus became suitable for my own research project.

As the next chapter will demonstrate, this qualitative 'mixed methods'²⁹ approach produced some very insightful results. Specifically, the traditional methodology allowed for the collection of important demographic information, while the CAR methodology alerted me to the necessity of building deep

²⁸ Specifically, there were no sex work community groups with which to participate.

²⁹ One that combines two somewhat incongruent theoretical traditions; that of symbolic interactionism and Foucauldian discourse analysis.

relationships of 'trust' (through the very practical, and time-consuming activity of helping to create a local sex-worker agency) with subjects who often suspect that they may be treated badly by researchers from outside the community. Finally, Miller's methodology allowed me to produce a powerful analysis of sex workers 'talking back', even when the communities which provide the foundation for CAR-informed research, did not exist.

Part I: Conventional Methodological Considerations

Because my project began as an extension of Jeffrey and MacDonald's (2006a) research (to St. John's), it initially sought to simply reproduce their methods. Moreover, it followed a tried and trusted formula, as similar methods have informed much of the Canadian research on sex work. In fact, many scholars have become trailblazers in prioritizing the voices of sex workers³⁰ by using such methods.

This particular methodology is informed, primarily, by the symbolic interactionist tradition³¹ frequently associated with the study of stigma.³² And because this perspective is concerned with how human beings "construct, share, resist,

³⁰ Examples include researchers such as Cecilia Benoit, Raven Bowen, Chris Bruckert, Vicky Bungay, Frederique Chabot, Elya Durisin, Stacey Hannem, Mikael Jansson, Alison Millar, Rachel Phillips, Fran Shaver, and Emily van der Meulen, among others.

³¹ This area of sociology is concerned with how human beings "construct, share, resist, modify or reject various aspects of the social world" (Given, 2008, p. 849). Symbolic interactionism studies the intersubjective creation of reality, the self, or society. As a research method it is concerned with the "creation and communication of meaning" (Given, p. 851); meaning itself becomes part of the social process, something to be investigated in and of itself rather than being assumed as fixed.

³² Goffman himself was often seen as being located within the symbolic interactionist school.

modify or reject various aspects of the social world” (Given, 2008, p. 849), it has great potential for showing the nuances and details of everyday interaction.³³ Moreover, its primary aim is to collect and analyze data from people’s experiences; sometimes via ethnographic research in naturalistic settings, at other times via focus groups, informal interviews etc. So my research project began by adhering to its standard interviewing practices and protocols, as the following discussion shows. However, it also had to first take into account one or two exceptional circumstances.

Location

Whereas Jeffrey and MacDonald had studied the Maritime provinces, this research was (and still is) exceptional in that it takes place in the small city (Anderson and Papageorgiou, 1992; Bourne, 1989) of St. John’s, NL, rather than in the large urban areas where the majority of sex work research has previously occurred (a notable exception in Canada includes Hannem’s (2018) research in rural southern Ontario). Moreover, before my project, there had been no locally conducted studies of the sex industry in Newfoundland; an island which at the time of research had no sex work-specific services and a culture unique to the rest of Canada (Chafe, 2003). Nevertheless, my aim was to interview sex workers in St. John’s to discover more about the relationship

³³ Because Symbolic Interactionists study the minutia of social action rather than larger social structures, they support the development of sociological methods that enable researchers to focus on the processes of meaning making. Instead of relying on “quantitatively derived data that were collected through representative survey research and analyzed using statistics” (Given, 2008, p. 849),

between sex work and stigma in this urban area. Perhaps not surprisingly, one issue that was immediately confronted was that of carrying out research on the typically hard-to-reach population of sex workers.

Sampling and Access

There are numerous challenges inherent in research involving hard-to-reach populations (Benoit, Jansson, Millar & Phillips, 2005; Shaver, 2005) and as no sampling frame existed for sex work research specifically, conventional random sampling methods were practically impossible³⁴. Nevertheless, this challenge was addressed through the use of diverse sampling methods.

That is to say, participants were contacted through advertisements placed on the online sites where sex workers advertise their services, as well as through various work locations such as escort agencies and massage parlours, through advertisement at local universities and colleges, posters hung at local bars, coffee shops, grocery stores, etc. While the research was advertised at sex work-related locations, such as the local exotic dance clubs, the variety of advertisement locations acknowledges the fact that sex workers have lives outside of sex work. The posters' imagery was discrete - a picture of the ocean, rather than sex work related images, such as a red umbrella. There were business cards in plastic pockets on the front of the poster for the fastest

³⁴ Cf Bungay et al., 2016 for developments in the area of designing a purposeful sampling strategy inclusive of sex workers' heterogeneity; article published post the current research design and implementation.

possible removal. The cards also contained the same image as the poster, so it was not immediately identifiable as something to do with sex work. Snow-ball, or word-of-mouth sampling (Emmel, Hughes, Greenhalgh & Sales, 2007; Atkinson & Flint, 2001) was also used, as well as referrals by community agencies.

In addition, I already had relationships of trust with community partners that far pre-existed the research, and this proved extremely helpful in gaining support for the research project. Community partnerships with various organizations, including “The AIDS Committee of Newfoundland”, “The St. John’s Women’s Centre”, “The Sexual Health Centre”, “Thrive” and “Street Reach” were advantageous, as these organizations both helped to advertise the research and provided interview space. Furthermore, prior to conducting the interviews, I had many years’ experience volunteering with a street outreach organization in St. John’s, as well as with the local needle exchange and a community coalition addressing the sexual exploitation of youth.

Also related to relationship building, my cultural knowledge (Smith, 1987) as a resident of St. John’s was important. In a city with a unique dialect (Kirwin et al, 1990) and culture; being “of this place” was key for establishing rapport with interviewees. Also, the fact that I lived in the area where the majority of street work occurs was helpful for the interviews with people doing street work, as researcher presence in the area, through both volunteer work as well as mundane activities such as dog walking, meant visibility to, and contact with, some of the participants.

In terms of the way that the research was presented in advertisements, the posters mentioned stigma and conveyed participation in interviews as an opportunity for sex workers to “talk back” and “have their voice heard” – in other words, there was an inherent politicality in the project. Thus, I was aware that this type of methodological framing of the research could affect “sampling”, with regard to who participated in the study and, in turn, the results. Initially, that was a question that worried me. Fortunately, as will be shown, I was eventually able to resolve this uneasiness,³⁵ but in the meantime, I was still concerned with following standard practices regarding qualitative research.

Interview Process

In response to the research advertisement, participants made contact through phone, text and email. Interviews took place at various sites: coffee shops, hotel lobbies, park benches, restaurants, or anywhere where we could find a quiet, private space. (One was held in a participant’s home). A group of women who were incarcerated at the time of interview were interviewed together on a visit to the Clarenville Correctional Centre for Women. The remaining interviews were held at community organizations including “The AIDS Committee of Newfoundland”, “Naomi Centre Shelter” and “The St. John’s Women’s Centre”.

³⁵ This was accomplished when I went beyond these conventional approaches and found other research methodologies (eg feminist and discourse analytic approaches) that enabled me, methodologically and not just theoretically, to satisfactorily answer these worries.

Participants were given a choice of where they felt the most comfortable being interviewed, including naming their own alternate locations.

When we met, the study was explained, and participants were asked about their comfort level with being recorded. No one asked to not be recorded, but one person asked that the recording be transcribed and then erased immediately following the interview. To begin the interview, the person would verbally consent to being part of the research.

Everyone was given a copy of an informed consent form with information including a definition of informed consent. They were also informed of the fact that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, and they were given the contact information for whom to follow up with at the university, if there was an issue with the interview. No one was asked to sign anything, and no record of names were kept. This helped ease the minds of a number of individuals who may not have participated otherwise. In a place as small as St. John's, anonymity was an extremely important issue that was taken seriously in the design of the research.

Verbal consent gained, the interviews then took the form of approximating as close to informal conversations as possible. Many participants just dove in and were very forthcoming with their information and opinions. Initially, I did develop an interview guide, but quickly abandoned it; it was not necessary because participants had much to say and the interviews were able to very quickly approximate natural conversation. In fact, the very first interview went over two

hours, and the participant very much directed the conversation (within the confines of the research themes, which were made explicit in the advertising, posters, and initial recruitment phone call).

Colloquially, Newfoundlanders are known to have the “gift of gab” and indeed, conversations did flow naturally. This was a good learning experience for me as a researcher in that my expectation around the need for a set of questions was incorrect, and I was able to gain much richer data by “going with the flow” and allowing for the expertise of lived experience to be the driver of the discussions. In that sense, these interviews resembled ‘naturally occurring conversation’, a point that will become more important later on. Clarification questions were asked throughout, and in the few instances where questions or probes were needed in a more formal way, people were asked to talk about themselves, their work, its place in their lives, how they felt others in St. John’s saw their work, and most importantly what they would say to those people. In the end, open-ended interviews (Carlin, 2009; Fontana and Frey, 1994; Lichtman, 2010; Luker, 2008) were conducted with thirty-two individuals who do sex work.

In many ways, the fact that the interviews quickly approximated friendly conversation spoke to the advantage of being “of this place”, as being local helped with the trust-building necessary to have people open up in that way³⁶. In terms of trust, the small nature and inter-connectedness of St. John’s helped as

³⁶ In other words, because of my own ‘cultural competence’ with regard to the ‘local culture’ it was much easier for the participants to share their experiences with me. Of course, it was the ethnomethodologists who first taught us the importance of ‘cultural competence’ for sociological analysis (see Garfinkel, 1986).

well, as people quickly spread the word and I became known as a safe person to talk to. Participants were encouraged to guide the discussions, within the frame of focus of the research. For example, even though there was no formal interview schedule, all participants gave their own opinions of sex work stigma. In addition, they provided descriptions/definitions of their work, as well as their own descriptions/definitions of themselves and their lives inside and outside of the sex industry. These conversations also revolved around “talking back”; each participant was asked what they would say to those who hold stigmatizing views of sex workers, if given the chance. Finally, everyone was offered \$20 for their time.

Ethical Considerations

In line with all standard research projects on human subjects, this project entailed being reviewed by an ethics board. In June 2013, this project was approved by the ethics board at the University of New Brunswick. As it is commonly understood that sex work can be a sensitive subject for the people involved; there were a number of pre-identified potential ethical issues involved in this project.

Informed Consent

As mentioned above, the nature of the research was explained to all participants prior to beginning the interview and recorded verbal consent to their participation was required to proceed. There is an additional important point to be made here about consent, namely, that anyone who was believed to be

under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the interview was not allowed to participate in the study at that time and was asked to make further contact when sober. Someone who is in an altered state cannot give full informed consent. Interviewing someone who is under the influence of intoxicants could possibly involve taking advantage of that person's altered state and poses ethical dilemmas which are best dealt with by avoiding that situation altogether.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Due to the aforementioned stigma associated with sex work, the fieldwork for this dissertation operated under the assumption that the people involved in the trade did not want their identities revealed. Thus, participants were not asked for their names; interviews were identified by chronological numbers, and when paid at the end of the interview, participants simply needed to mark an 'x' next to their interview number to confirm their payment. Names of participants do not appear in the final copy of this dissertation, but also, the names were unknown to the researcher at the discretion of the participant (except in cases where participants volunteered that information). Instead of having participants sign a consent form, the consent form was read aloud by the researcher at the beginning of the interviews, and participants gave recorded verbal consent to their participation.

Participants were also given a choice of where they wanted to be interviewed. Again, this was carefully prepared so as to ensure the confidentiality of the

interviews. It was explained to potential participants, that employees at the community organizations that offered space for interviews knew the nature of the research; thus, being seen by staff meant being identified as a sex worker. To mediate this, one of the interview locations, The St. John's Women's Centre, offered the use of their facilities after hours. This meant that participants did not have to walk into an organization during the times it served members of the public, and when most employees were present. That same organization offered the option to let participants in through a back door, so that they did not have to walk past after-hours staff members on the way to the interview room.

The above measures helped to assure confidentiality for all participants in this dissertation and avoided "outing" anyone. In addition, only limited demographic information was collected, so as to try and mediate the potential of readers identifying any research participants.

The Possibility of Triggering

While this dissertation's theorizing fits within the growing field of sex work literature that does not simply assume sex workers are victims, that is not to say that some people involved in the industry have not been victimized or experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse while working (Deering et. al, 2014). Thus, some of these issues arose in interviews, and the sensitivity of this information, called for increased vigilance on the part of the researcher. This is a reality for any research involving sensitive issues, and this was mediated

through both specialized training on the part of the researcher, as well as the provision of external supports for participants.

Skills acquired through volunteer work and training allowed the researcher to respond in a trauma-informed manner during the interview, (Arthur et al., 2013) and every participant was provided the option to speak with a professional counsellor or social worker following the interview. These professionals were on call at community locations; thus, the proper supports were established to deal with crisis situations, although none did arise. While these steps did not eliminate the possibility that a participant could have been triggered by recalling a negative experience during an interview, they did ensure that the participant could receive professional attention (albeit, at the cost of a break in confidentiality in terms of the counsellor/social worker having knowledge of study participation).

Part II: Going Beyond Traditional Qualitative Methods

Feminist Qualitative Methods for Researching Sex Work

Although the methodological guidelines described, in detail, above are conventional ones (especially for scholarly research emanating from the symbolic interactionist tradition), as this research was also informed by feminist theorizing, I found myself exploring other methodologies more attuned to the theoretical and methodological issues that feminist theory has raised for traditional social scientific research (as well as for some of the practical issues I was facing in my own research project). Although sex work is not exclusively a

woman's profession today, it remains heavily dominated by women. Moreover, when I turned my attention to these feminist-inspired methodologies, I found that they sought to address a number of the blind spots associated with conventional methods; blind spots that I was already experiencing in my own research project and that were already causing me to be uneasy about my project.

Of course, ever since the emergence of feminist sociology in the 1970's, concerns with methods have been central to the feminist project. Smith's (1974a) famous critique of (traditional) sociology as ideology was primarily a critique of the methods and concepts that sociology had used throughout the 20th century.³⁷ As a result, her alternative methodology starts from the world as we, (both sociologists and lay members), actually experience it³⁸, the world of shared 'lived experience' rather than of sociological concepts and methods. However, this was not the only methodological breakthrough that emerged. As early feminism was always insistent on not just describing the social world from this hitherto-ignored perspective, but on improving women's lives in the process, it should not be surprising that various forms of 'action research' were another result of early feminist influence on research.

³⁷ By referring to sociology "as ideology", Smith was commenting on the hierarchical power relations inherent in sociology as a discipline. She was stating that the "objectivity" required of the social scientist produces a definitive version of "how things are" that is both reflective of, and participates in, the practices of ruling in society.

³⁸ Beginning from where we are located bodily is both a philosophical and methodological shift; and Smith's resulting institutional ethnography explores textually mediated social organization (1974b), or the ways in which texts and discourses associated with work processes act as technologies of social control. Smith's feminist reading, and re-working, of sociology was as much a contribution to sociological methods as it was to social theory

For example, the Muriel McQueen Fergusson centre for Family Violence research in New Brunswick “from its inception,... adopted a model of Collaborative Action-Oriented Research conducted by multidisciplinary teams of academic and community researchers” (Byers and Harrison 2004, p. 24)³⁹. This approach was explicitly linked to feminist theorizing, “in keeping with feminist principles of participatory of collaborative research (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Reinharz, 1992), members of the particular community that was the focal point of the study also would be part of the research team” (Byers and Harrison 2004, p. 24). This ‘Collaborative Action-Oriented Research’ (CAOR) is simply one form of the larger umbrella of Participatory Action Research (PAR) concerned with research for change purposes. It attends to the principles of PAR by not only requiring individual community members to act as research partners rather than subjects, but the research must also produce meaningful results for the communities involved. These teams’ research certainly led to actionable research. To take but one example given by Byers and Harrison,

many of the recommendations of the Canadian Forces’ Response to Woman abuse in Military Families, produced in collaboration with a sister team at RESOLVE (Research and Education For Solutions to Violence Everywhere) at the University of Manitoba (Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre and RESOLVE 2000) are in the process of being implemented by the Minister of National Defence (Byers and Harrison, 2004, p. 49).

³⁹ The actual emergence of this centre also demonstrates this concern with ‘action research’. That is to say, after the trauma of the Montreal massacre in 1989, the Federal government helped establish five research centres throughout Canada, whose aim was to not only focus on the issue of violence against women but also to advocate for policies and practices that would help ameliorate this structural violence within society. The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research was one of the five centres established.

Obviously then, some form of participatory action research (PAR), wherein researchers work with communities from inception to execution, would enable me to go beyond the limitations of interactionist-informed methodologies and steer my research in a more policy-relevant direction. However, my early experiences in the field, along with my prior reading of the recent literature on sex work meant that the specific type of action research to be engaged in, would require serious reflection.

The issues I had to grapple with can be summarized as follows. First, although intending to be guided by feminist theorizing, I was already well aware that certain forms of feminist research (Barry, 1995; Dworkin, 1981, 1993, 1997; Jeffreys, 1997, 2004; MacKinnon, 2005; Millet, 1990; Raymond, 1998) seemed to be denying the agency to sex workers that early feminism had demanded for women, when challenging traditional “malestream” sociology.

Fortunately for me, van der Meulen (2011) has drawn attention to this problem, as it affects sex work research. For her,

One of the biggest challenges to building bridges between sex workers and researchers is the large ideological disjuncture in conceptualizations of prostitution. This divide, in turn, informs methodological practice (p. 379).

More concretely, those research projects that are grounded in the understanding of sex workers as victims⁴⁰ “have helped to facilitate a

⁴⁰ For examples, see (Barry, 1995; Dworkin, 1993; Farley, 2007; Jeffreys 1997, 2004, 2009; MacKinnon, 1983, 1985, 2005; Millet, 1990; Raymond, 1998).

relationship of distrust between sex working communities and feminist researchers” (van der Meulen, 2011, p. 371). My first concern was that such research may, in turn, be contributing (albeit unwittingly) to sex work stigma.

Second, early on in my project, I quickly became aware of the tacit power relationship which is conventionally assumed when one is seen as a professional expert on the issue of sex work. Specifically, I was asked to display my supposed professional expertise and give an interview on sex work, even though, at that time, I had done almost no research on the topic. Before considering representing local sex workers publicly, I needed to understand what messaging people wanted about their work, and also to explore whether there was anyone with lived experience who was open to speaking.

Third, I was also aware that issues of sex worker – researcher trust were often of paramount concern for many sex workers, and I was determined to do as much as possible to ensure that any trust relationship I formed, would be a strong and lasting one. This was especially important seeing as many sex workers feel that previous scholars have done them a disservice in the portrayal of them as victims.

Fortunately, van der Meulen’s work tackles both of these problems directly, when she discusses how it is possible to carry out action research with sex workers. Moreover, she not only addresses the specific worries that I had, but she suggests other methodological guidelines aimed at reducing the effects of

misplaced agency, tacit power assumptions and participants' distrust of researchers.

From Participatory Action Research to Community Action Research

The Collaborative Action-Oriented Approach, discussed above, may be seen as one form of the more general concept of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which has emerged to counter some of the deficiencies seen in traditional methodologies. It certainly attempts to fulfill its mandate of producing research with direct and concrete actionable results. However, as van der Meulen (2011) points out, PAR in general is somewhat lacking in its attention to relationships of power and trust inherent in the research process. Of course, in research on sex work, such issues are of the utmost importance. Thus, van der Meulen proposes a variant on PAR, one which addresses these concerns, while simultaneously marrying activism with action research. This Community Action Research (CAR, not to be confused with CAOR) methodology explicitly acknowledges that although PAR may be an improvement on traditional methods, CAR is more attentive to issues of trust and power. A brief comparison of the two approaches will hopefully make this clear.

Fundamentally, PAR necessitates a shift in “researching on” to “researching with” individuals; people involved are not simply subjects of research but are expected to act as key partners in the research process. Equally importantly, this method emphasizes the participation and action of partners in collective inquiry. In addition, this approach positions itself on an emancipatory line (Graca

et. al, 2018), with the goal of creating real benefits for the community involved (Flaskerund & Anderson, 1999; Reason, 1999). It is not about knowledge production for production's sake but is concerned with social change as a result of that knowledge production (Brydon-Miller et al, 2003). For this to occur, communities need to be involved in the initial design and research process, as well as the analysis, and subsequent implementation of action-oriented solutions (Pain, 2004; Whyte, 1991). In many respects, the Collaborative Action-Oriented Research of the MMFF centre, discussed above, fits these guidelines.

Yet, despite these noble goals, PAR has been criticized for paying more attention to the principles of its research, rather than actual practices (Reason, 1999). As a result, PAR allows for a wide variety of actual research practices. For example, Pretty et al (1995) note that although most authors state that PAR depends on collective action, various forms of participation may be valid, and the actual mode of participation depends on many factors. Certainly, Byers and Harrison (2004) were able to produce a tremendously insightful overview of the many different ways of approaching PAR (or Collaborative Action-Oriented Research, as they called it), when it was introduced into their research centre, as the preferred methodology. However, this may also lead to blind spots. For example, although participants may often be co-constructors of the research process, the steps necessary to ensure the accountability of the researcher to the communities involved may be lacking. It is to address questions like this, that van der Meulen proposes her alternative approach – Community Action Research (CAR).

Community Action Research is founded on many of the same principles as PAR but distinguishes itself by paying attention to issues oftentimes associated with marginalized communities being researched. Perhaps most crucially, issues of exploitation and trust that may exist between researchers and communities are addressed directly. With regard to the latter, van der Meulen argues that “conventional social science research projects and processes have helped to facilitate a relationship of distrust between sex working communities and feminist researchers” (2011, p. 371). She notes that many sex working communities are weary of researchers who come, take these communities’ knowledge and time, and then leave and build research careers, while the sex work communities themselves receive nothing of real value to them, in return. Similarly, she cites Dudash’s (1997) interviews with strip-club dancers who “felt that sex workers are constantly misrepresented by academics and journalists from outside the industry” (van der Meulen 2011, p. 373). To counter such trust issues, CAR encourages a breaking down of the problematic academic researcher/community member relationship. Hitherto, the academic researcher was the “outsider” coming into the community, carrying out their research (perhaps in collaboration with community members) and then leaving.

In contrast, CAR envisages a completely different role for the researcher. As Brydon-Miller et al suggest; the researcher becomes a

hybrid of scholar/activist in which neither role takes precedence. Our academic work takes place within and is made possible by our political commitments and we draw on our experiences as community activists and organizers to inform our scholarship (cited in van der Meulen 2011, p. 375).

As van der Meulen (2011) continues; “those who engage in action research are often already engaged with the local stakeholders as organizers and activists” (p. 375). Such a strategy, she believes, goes a long way to help mediate the issue of trust that has dogged sex work research in recent years. The intended end result is that researchers within the CAR tradition not only become hybrids of activists/researchers, concerned with social justice for the communities they research with, but they also work hard to ensure that issues of trust do not emerge.

The other related issue that CAR directly confronts is that of “the exploitative nature of social science research” (van der Meulen 2011, p. 374). With regard to sex work specifically, “the absence of praxis in most studies... has, among other things, contributed to a production of knowledge that many sex workers claim does not reflect realities” (Wahab, cited in van der Meulen 2011, p. 371). Not only that, but “radical feminist writing has argued that sex workers are only ever the victims of male violence and sexual exploitation” (van der Meulen 2011, p. 372). This conclusion has been reached by researchers “glossing over complexity and diversity in order to present homogenous images of the sex industry” (van der Meulen 2011, p. 371-2). That glossing over is coupled with “a research framework that positions sex workers as unable to participate in research about their lived realities” (van der Meulen, 2011, p. 372).

Thus, in order to counteract these concerns about exploitation, and to hopefully bring egalitarian and democratic principles to the research process, CAR promotes the active involvement of sex workers in research design, process,

dissemination and implementation of solutions. In addition, it necessitates that researchers “prioritize their political convictions” (p. 375) in their work, drawing on their experiences as community activists and organizers to inform their scholarship. The hope is that the problematic power dynamic of the researcher/researched relationship can be challenged. This approach actually informed van der Meulen’s own research. That is, she utilized action research methodology and community involvement in research alongside her activism and involvement in the sex workers’ rights movement. Moreover, she noted that her “strong sex workers’ rights perspective was central to building the trust and solidarity needed for successful research” (p. 379).

When carrying out research on marginalized groups such as sex workers, issues that may have been backgrounded in more traditional research designs, not only foreground themselves, but insist on being confronted. In this regard, van der Meulen’s approach shows significant promise; as it tackles thorny, but usually backgrounded issues. As we have seen, CAR promotes a very novel understanding of the researcher. That is, s/he is no longer an objective outsider to the research process. CAR also promotes a very different understanding of the trust relationship between researcher and researched. Whereas, traditional methodologies spend little time on this topic, assuming for the most part, that this is not a significant problem, van der Meulen highlights the necessity of paying explicit and close attention to this issue, because sex workers have become wary of research that misrepresents them. Thus, the researcher must constantly attend to this concern.

Finally, and relatedly, van der Meulen links this issue of “exploitative research methods” (2011, p. 372), to the theoretical considerations which inform those methods. For example, when “radical feminist researchers ...conceptualize sex workers as victims in need of protection, unable to make decisions about their lives and work” (2011, p. 379), their choice of research methodology will reflect the theoretical conceptualization that they bring to bear on the people they are going to study.

In order to challenge such an inadequate conceptualization, van der Meulen suggests that

an action research framework, where sex workers are actively involved in the research design, implementation, analysis and dissemination, can be a highly effective way to challenge problematic conceptualizations and to ensure the voices of the community are not overshadowed by ideology (2011, p. 379).

In other words, questions about transparency and the politicality of sex work research are now being given serious consideration.⁴¹

Van der Meulen’s promotion of CAR methodology certainly does address many of the issues found in sex work research, and also addresses some of the issues I found in the early days of my own research. Nevertheless, her approach assumes a number of features of sex work research that may not always be present in any actual research endeavour. For me, the major issue with adopting this method in Newfoundland was that there was no cohesive

⁴¹ And in the context of this transparency, ethics in research takes on a new meaning (cf Dewey and Zheng, 2013).

community of sex workers at the time, no outreach or advocacy program for sex workers, and as such, no space where sex workers were coming together in any way that would facilitate this type of CAR.

Fortunately, Miller's (2000, 2003) work suggested a theoretical/methodological solution that attends to several of the concerns that van der Meulen identified (the need to amplify the embodied voices of the marginalized, the need to consider methodological and theoretical concerns as informing each other, the standpoint of the researcher), but it does that without recourse to the necessity of already having an organized community of the marginalized accessible.

Part III: Beyond Community Action Research: Qualitative Methods from the Theoretical and Methodological Margins

In many regards, van der Meulen is attempting to amplify the voices of sex workers, so that they can talk back to those forms of social scientific research that have misinterpreted them. However, in order to do that, van der Meulen sought to create research projects with already existing groups of sex workers. In my case, such groups did not exist at that time. The lack of sex worker advocacy or organizing in the province was uniquely relevant for this dissertation, as the majority of work on stigma resistance examines organized activism (Benoit et. al, 2018; Bruckert and Hannem, 2013). Nevertheless, Miller (2003) suggests a powerful way of demonstrating how the marginalized, those on the underside, find ways of talking back to relations of power, even as single individuals. Her preference is for a form of discourse analysis; but it is not a

simple utilization of the insights of conversation analysis⁴² to study the naturally occurring conversation of the marginalized. Instead, Miller's mature work (2000, 2003) deals with the issues that marginalized groups face when trying to get their voices heard. Although she does not deal with sex work specifically, in many ways she suggests a theory/method which addresses the issues left unanswered in Van der Meulen's work. So, let us deal with each in turn.

Amplifying the Embodied Voice of the Marginalized

The fundamental premise of Miller's discourse analysis is "that language constitutes rather than reflects reality, and that speakers use talk strategically to accomplish their purposes in particular settings" (2000, p. 317). In their talk, all people promote one version of the world and disqualify another⁴³; thus, in this methodology, all language is analyzed as a "claims-making" enterprise, and these claims are stories or accounts designed to further some practical goal. Yet, for practical methodological purposes, Miller is instructing us, as do the conversation analysts in their work, to pay extremely close attention to the naturally occurring talk of the marginalized, at the level of the individual

⁴² Conversation analysis was originally inspired by the pioneering work of Harvey Sacks. For an insightful overview, see Silverman (1998).

⁴³ This claims-making applies to researchers as well. In fact, Miller suggests that researchers should "take ownership of the political dimension of the inquiry" (2000, p. 331). In other words, she is pointing out that we, as theorists and researchers, are always reading the practices and strategies displayed by individuals as embedded with one kind of significance rather than another and in so doing, our interpretations are prioritizing one understanding over another. But she wants to make that explicit, rather than implicit. Thus, she openly admits that her readings are linked to specific broader feminist issues and concerns. Moreover, Miller insists on the importance of displaying the connection between the values and commitments of the theorist and the analysis itself, so as to acknowledge this academic 'claims-making'.

her/himself. By paying attention to the strategic use of language; wherein language is analyzed as a “claims-making” enterprise (Miller, 2000), one can identify the subtle strategies individuals use to get their voices heard. But this can only be done by analyzing language inside, rather than outside of, its context of use. It is by paying such close attention to how individuals do things with words, that one can also identify the politicality that is inherent in the everyday talk of the “subaltern”. Not surprisingly perhaps, a methodology like this, certainly held promise for someone like myself, wanting to amplify the voice of the marginalized, especially when this could be done in situations when the marginalized did not have anything remotely like a collective voice. Yet Miller’s writings were also useful in addressing another issue raised by van der Meulen.

Considering Theoretical and Methodological Concerns Informing Each Other

Van der Meulen (2011) makes a strong case that methodological concerns are often informed by theoretical stances, and that in order to carry out CAR, one needs to problematize both theoretical and methodological concerns.

Specifically, she critiques radical feminism for using its conceptualization of sex workers as victims to inform its methodologies and thus to foreground and highlight only certain features of sex workers’ lives. Not surprisingly, many sex workers ended up very distrustful of research like this, which turns them into “victims”. Thus, the trust issue is a very serious one.

To counter this, van der Meulen argues that Community Action Research starts from the community and includes community members' views in the entire methodological process. She exemplifies this with her own research project in which she, a confessed "Marxist-feminist" (2011, p. 376) scholar with a "strong sex workers' rights perspective" (2011, p. 379) worked with Toronto sex workers' organizations to collectively design a research project. Perhaps not surprisingly, elements of that theoretical stance infuse the project, as it becomes a project on "the ways in which workplace improvements can be achieved through policy change and labor organizing" (2011, p. 379). In other words, van der Meulen's own theoretical stance (Marxist-feminism) tacitly shape the project into being one about labour practices, and about improving the workplace for its workers; all concerns that follow naturally from Marx's theoretical understanding of the central importance of 'labour'.

In certain ways, Miller's approach goes even further than van der Meulen's. Because Miller's theoretical point is to prioritize everyday language at the level of theory, as well as at the level of method. She follows the 'conversation analytic' injunction to study how members themselves construct their sense of 'shared reality' through their interaction, (through their mundane sense-making practices, one might say) rather than imposing upon that interaction, an 'analytic interpretation' informed by the researcher's prior theorizing on the topic.⁴⁴ Thus, Miller is advocating that we listen to how individuals themselves, through their

⁴⁴ For a pioneering account of how conversation analysis differs from traditional sociological perspectives (including Goffmanian-inspired ones), consult Atkinson and Drew (1979).

talk, 'make sense' of power relations, rather than imposing (previously formulated) 'theoretical' interpretations of power relationships (e.g. victim status) upon them.⁴⁵

The Standpoint of the Researcher

The third, and related, issue that van der Meulen addresses in her promotion of Community Action Research is the "exploitation problem" that surrounds certain forms of sex work research. Oftentimes, this is linked with the "insider/outsider" dichotomy, where "insider research is understood to be research that is conducted by a member of the community in question, whereas outsider research is when a non-group member designs and conducts the project" (van der Meulen 2011, p. 375). More importantly for van der Meulen, outsider research has not only resulted in distrust, but it has also resulted in a form of exploitation where researchers complete their research and then return "to the campus, institution or suburb where they write up their data, publish and build careers – on the backs of those they took data from" (O'Neil cited in van der Meulen, 2011, p. 373). In order to challenge this type of exploitation, van der Meulen's suggestion is to blur the insider/outsider dichotomy. By involving herself in the sex work community and engaging in research design with them, she temporarily blurs that distinction. Her standpoint, at least for the duration of the research is both outsider and insider. That is, CAR researchers "prioritise

⁴⁵ In the process, Miller (2000) shows the weaknesses of several forms of feminism for not taking everyday language seriously enough, and instead imposing analytic interpretations on everyday talk.

their political convictions and their academic work” (van der Meulen 2011, p. 375)

In contrast, Miller’s work puts forward a potentially more radical standpoint. Whereas van der Meulen conjoins political conviction and academic work, while at the same time understanding them as different activities, Miller brings politicality into academic work itself. She construes them as inseparable, because, for her, much academic work entails forms of ‘claims-making’, and thus displays its own tacit politicality. Thus academia mirrors, in certain ways, the claims-making that occurs outside the academy. In other words, Miller is pointing out talk’s routine politicality wherever it occurs. The theorist’s account is an enactment of power and a moral claim in much the same way as that of the participant’s. By returning us to that politicality wherever we find it (i.e. in the theorist’s “talk” as well as in the participant’s), this discursive approach “persistently reminds us of our ongoing complicity in the constitution of reality” (Miller 2000, p. 331). As a result, the researcher/researched dichotomy is rethought in a different way than van der Meulen’s. For Miller, her scholarly stance of prioritizing lay talk over theoretical talk and invoking the politicality of both lay and theoretical talk, results in a standpoint which sees research itself as inherently political, not just community activism being political. Whereas van der Meulen sees a distinction between the researcher as ‘scholar’ and the researcher as ‘activist’, and mainly wants to bring them closer together (the insider and outsider working together), Miller suggests the potential formation of the hybrid scholar/activist. The scholar/activist may inhabit the same corporeal

body, and the theoretical stance of the scholar is to acknowledge the politicality of 'theorising' as well as that of 'activism'.

The practical consequences of Miller's work for my own research methodology can now be clarified. Despite the initial attraction of researchers (like van der Meulen) who saw the myriad of issues with the radical feminist approach to sex work, a major practical issue for me was the lack of any community organizations of sex workers in St. John's when I began this research.

Moreover, I did not want to make the same mistake that the radical feminist perspective had made in its research (especially with its lack of attention to issues of trust and exploitation). Although I had begun with a desire to emulate MacDonald and Jeffrey's (2006a) study of Maritime sex workers "talking back", it is only now with Miller's attention to the "politicality of everyday talk" that I can articulate that concern, in a methodologically (and not just theoretically) sophisticated fashion.

The work of this chapter has been to explain the theoretical and practical journey that was undertaken in the lengthy implementation of this research project. It has tried to show the difficulties faced when trying to examine the ways in which individuals 'talk back' to what they see as relations of power; especially when certain forms of 'scholarly knowledge' may actually be perceived, by some, as being involved in these relations of power.⁴⁶ In this

⁴⁶ Of course, the claim being made here is that Foucauldian understandings of power/knowledge may also involve feminist knowledges as well. For a pioneering work in this vein see Smart (1989).

process, it has encountered other issues of trust, power, and exploitation, as well as the difficult relationship between scholarship and activism. All of them have been addressed, rather than being left in the margins.

More concretely, this chapter has traced the evolution of this project from an original starting point in conventional qualitative methods, through a subsequent realization of the possibilities offered by feminist-inspired methods, specifically Community Action Research, to the eventual recognition of the methodological (and theoretical) suitability of Millerian discourse analysis. Nevertheless, each of these methodological considerations were utilized to some extent, and added to the portrayal of sex workers that is contained within this dissertation.

The chapter to follow details the empirical results of that journey. It shows the results from the application of all three methods in the current project. In that sense, it constitutes itself as a chapter that shows the results of this novel 'qualitative mixed-methods' approach, which has been documented in this chapter. Of course, not each method was given equal weight, yet all three provided insights. The following chapter gives more details on those insights.

Preface: Chapter Three

Chapter Three parallels the intellectual development found in Chapter Two, and displays the preliminary results found through the use of all three methods⁴⁷. Moreover, the mixed methods employed display not only the results of their application, but the developing 'standpoint' of the researcher. The traditional methods allowed me to display interesting demographic information on the participants and are articulated from a traditional research standpoint. The CAR-inspired methodology reinforced my lay commitment to building a deep relationship of trust with my community and allows me to show how such a deep relationship was built. It also demonstrated a certain movement in my own standpoint; from traditional methodologist to scholar/activist methodologist. The Millerian methodology allowed me to show the politicality of individual resistance to stigma, even without the benefit of a community agency. Miller's approach also enabled a further development in my 'standpoint', whereby it is not just the methodology which becomes that of the scholar/activist, but also my theoretical stance.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ It should be noted that as the publications that comprise the body of this dissertation appear as stand-alone chapters in edited collections, certain aspects of the methodological discussion contained within Chapters Two and Three are repeated in these publications.

⁴⁸ Chapter Three is not published.

Chapter Three: Qualitative Mixed Methods: Some Preliminary Results

The methodological journey described in Chapter Two has produced an unconventional qualitative 'mixed methods' perspective, one that began with a rather traditional approach, then proceeded to learn from insights provided by 'Community Action Research', before ending with the discovery of Miller's feminist 'discourse analysis'. Although mixed methods are common in the social sciences (Luker, 2008), the version utilized here is rather unique. In part, that is because it is not a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, but rather a combination of different qualitative methods. Perhaps its most important contribution is that it deals very concretely, with certain of the specific issues one faces in the field (from an initial concern with sampling, to the more complex issues of power, trust and exploitation, to the routinely ignored issue of the researcher as insider or outsider). In the process of confronting these issues, one sees that the issue of the 'standpoint'⁴⁹ of the researcher becomes of central importance.

Traditional qualitative methods assume a researcher whose scholarly standpoint is outside the community s/he is studying. This methodological standpoint was undertaken, in a somewhat taken for granted fashion, at the outset of this research, in line with much of the research on stigma. It certainly has proven

⁴⁹ Of course, it was early feminism that introduced the notion that one could carry out research from a perspective other than that of the 'impartial' social scientist. This chapter traces a similar trajectory but perhaps goes even further than the usual 'feminist standpoint' scholars, such as Smith (c.f. Smith 1987)

useful in this project, to the extent that it is able to provide us with a wealth of demographic information about sex workers in St. John's. In contrast, CAR builds on its feminist origins and assumes a researcher whose standpoint is (at least, temporarily) inside the community s/he is studying, by virtue of her/his social position as a community activist. Its strengths are that it deals with issues of trust, exploitation and activism, typically downplayed in more traditional qualitative methods. This methodology has also proved useful to me; as it reminded me to the real necessity of paying serious attention to issues of 'trust' and 'exploitation' in the carrying out of research in sensitive areas such as 'sex work'. Furthermore, it has justified my work in building relationships of 'trust', which at the time, I thought were ancillary to the research process, but which I now consider to be an essential part of the research.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Miller's methodological perspective does not simply assume a researcher who is both an academic on the one hand, and an activist on the other, but rather assumes that the researcher's embodied standpoint is one of becoming a scholar/activist, both methodologically and theoretically. For her, activists are obviously engaged in claims-making activities, but Miller, in her mature work concludes that scholars, themselves, are tacitly engaging in similar activities. In other words, we all are constructing our world and ourselves through agentive talk, but Miller is perhaps the first scholar to explicitly articulate this theoretical/methodological standpoint. Her methodological suggestions also seemed to offer me a way of going beyond certain of the limitations I encountered with CAR. Thus, whereas CAR's

approach necessitated working closely with already existing community groups, Miller's approach allowed me to conduct my analysis in the absence of such groups. Also, whereas CAR's approach premises itself on the distinction between the outsider (the scholarly researcher) and the insider (the community group member), Miller's approach seeks to dissolve that distinction, via her theorizing of the researcher as a 'claims-making activist', engaged in similar activities to activist members of marginalised groups. As a result, this methodology allowed me to document the mundane 'politicality' of the agentive talk of sex workers.

Thus, the current chapter shows the initial results of this methodological journey. Section one provides an overview of the information found from the initial utilization of standard research methods. It adopts a traditional social scientific 'standpoint' and provides details, including demographic information, about the sex workers interviewed in St. John's. Section two shows the concrete utility of the CAR methodological perspective for my project. As was seen in Chapter Two, much of van der Meulen's methodological worries were not about 'technical' methodological issues (e.g. validity, sample size etc.), but were concerns about 'trust' and 'exploitation'. Thus, section two demonstrates how her methodology allowed me to comprehend that the work that I had been carrying out with regard to 'community-building' (but seeing it as being outside the research process), could now be theoretically justified as an essential and integral element of the research process. That is to say, the long arduous task of building 'trust' with groups who are suspicious of traditional researchers, can

now be reconceptualised as an integral element of any research with vulnerable groups.

Section three also works to show some initial results of my application of the Millerian method. Because my interviews had been conducted as ‘informal conversations’ it was not difficult to treat them as being very similar to the ‘naturally occurring conversation’ preferred by discourse analysts. With Miller’s insistence on displaying the discursive resistance of the ‘underdog’, I am now able to display examples of these sex workers ‘talking back’ to relations of power. So, let us attend to the insights that each of these methodological approaches provided.

Part I: Sex Workers in St. John’s; Some Details

Although the original intention of this project was to examine how sex workers ‘talked back’, in the original interviews, significant information on the population of sex workers was gathered. This section gives the reader insight into this population, one which had never been subjected to academic study before. One of the most interesting features of this population was its gender constitution. Whereas, much sex work research only involves females who work on the street and are connected to sex work services (as stated by O’Doherty, 2007, and reflected in Armstrong, 2019; Ferris, 2015; Graca et al., 2018; Hail-Janes et al., 2017; Hubbard, 1998; Lazarus et al., 2012; Orchard et al., 2019; Oselin, 2009; Lowamn, 2000; Shaidman & Leon, 2019; Shannon et al., 2008); the St. John’s population interviewed is somewhat unusual in that it includes men and women

working in both indoor and outdoor locations of the sex industry. Let me give more details.

In St. John's, men and women who do sex work reported a vast range of experiences, across a broad sector of sex industry involvement. Some were engaged in work which included physical touch, while others were not; some worked outdoors, others indoors; some worked for themselves, others had third parties involved in their transactions; some loved the work, while other hated it. There was no strict definition of sex work provided⁵⁰; rather, it was stated in recruitment that the research was for anyone who is involved in the provision of sexual services. This created space within the interviews for participants to self-identify and self-define their own interpretation of the term "sex work". Thus, there was a wide variety of types of sex work represented in the study, from street based, to massage work, to escorting, to cam (video) work. This diversity is reflected in the demographics below.

The reader should be reminded here, that due to concerns about confidentiality and anonymity, there was no specific demographic questionnaire included as part of this research. Rather, participants were welcome to share whatever details of themselves and their lives they wanted to. It was completely at their own discretion. Thus, the information in this demographic section is based on what people voluntarily brought up in conversation. Any statistics described here

⁵⁰ This is in line with the qualitative tradition that informs much of symbolic interactionist, ethnomethodological and institutional ethnographic research, which is looking for participants' 'meanings' rather than analytic ones.

are in no way to be extrapolated as comments about the general population of people who do sex work; they only exist to provide a little more context about the individuals interviewed.

Nevertheless, valuable information was obtained, albeit information that was not straightforwardly accessible. Specifically, it was obtained by a careful re-reading of the interviews to extract the relevant data. Unfortunately, for eleven of the interviews, which were conducted with a group with women who were incarcerated at the time, there was less demographic information available in the interview data. This accounts for the missing data in Table 2.

Table 1 explores working conditions by gender, while Table 2 states all demographic information provided by participants. The key for Table 2 is provided in the paragraph that precedes it. Also, the interview number is not included in the table, preventing the matching of demographic information with particular quotes throughout this work. That omission is intentional as some participants were extremely worried about being identified via the matching of their quotes with demographics; this measure was taken to comply with their wishes.

Twenty-five women and seven men were interviewed. No one identified as trans. One man did state that he dressed as a woman when working and took on a feminine identity. He self-identified as a “cross-dresser” when working but stated that his gender was male.

Table 1: Working Conditions By Gender

WORKING CONDITIONS	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
Agency	5	0	5
Cam Work	1	0	1
Independent (alone)	5	5	10
Independent (w/ other)	9	2	11
Street Based (unknown)	2	0	2
Street Based (alone)	3	0	3
Street Based (w/ other)	1	0	1

As mentioned earlier, participants in this study engaged in a variety of types of sex work. Of thirty-two people interviewed, twenty-one worked independently, meaning they worked for themselves, without the involvement of a manager or agency. Individuals in this category either saw people in their own homes or did out calls to another location. The services provided included massage work, the provision of sexual services, and paid companionship. They mostly reported advertising online, via third party websites or their own professional web pages. Only two people who worked together discussed seeing only regulars and did no advertising at all. Of the twenty-one who did independent sex work, ten of those worked alone, while eleven worked with at least one other person as a working partner (but not manager role). Five people worked for agencies, including massage and escort agencies. These individuals did have managers and were not responsible for their own advertisement of services. One person

did online cam work, where she was paid via a tipping system for live shows involving both sexual and non-sexual acts. Six people were engaged in street-based sex work, three alone, one with a friend and two did not specify if their street work happened with others or alone. One person was engaged in two types of sex work, both independent and street-based work, at the time of the interview (thus the total adding to thirty-three types of sex work rather than thirty-two individuals interviewed). Six of thirty-two people had engaged in more than one type of sex work in their lives. All had once worked on the street and now worked either at an agency or independently. They noted that the use of online advertising and cell phones meant that they no longer needed to go to the street to find clients.

All seven males interviewed worked in independent sex work, two with others and five alone. For women working in independent sex work, the ratio is the inverse, with nine working with others and five alone. Independent sex work was also the most popular condition of work, with twenty one of thirty-two participants engaging in it. Street based, and agency work were engaged in by six and five people respectively, while one person did cam work.

Eleven of the thirty-two people were incarcerated at the time of interview. Two of thirty-two were post-secondary students at the time of the interviews. Fourteen had a history of drug use that they identified as significant in their lives (i.e. not casual drug use). For example, in one interview I asked

And what was the reason for going back at it [sex work], like at that time?

To which the person replied:

Drugs! Drugs! Total completely drugs when I was 28. I mean that was the only way I made any money for drugs, I could barely get enough money to live off, you know? (Linda)

These were the kinds of statements that led to including a person's history of drug use in the table. For some of those who cited a history of drug use, the drug use was a significant factor in their sex work; one woman described the fact that she did not want to be engaged in sex work and that she needed to be high to work.

No one identified as being managed in an exploitative relationship by a person (pimp) at the time of interview, but three of the women whose work was related to their drug use said that they also supported their boyfriend's drug use and in one case the woman mentioned that her boyfriend often orchestrated her exchanging sex for drugs. Three of twenty-one individuals did disclose a history of youth sexual exploitation, and all named that there was a man who they identified as their pimp at that time, but that they did not currently have anyone controlling them or their work. It is also notable that three of the five women who did street-based sex work did so to support their drug use. The other two were incarcerated and interviewed with a group; whether or not they had a history of drug use was not revealed in the interview data.

For the remaining demographic descriptors, the information was not available for the eleven incarcerated women; thus, the numbers are out of twenty-one. Ten of twenty-one individuals discussed their children. Seven of twenty-one

currently had partners, four of twenty-one were divorced and ten of twenty-one were single. Seven of twenty-one individuals referenced another job (sometimes called a “straight job”) in an area other than sex work. Those jobs ranged from convenience store cashier, to oil industry worker, to photographer, to cook, to florist, to waiter, to garage door installer.

In terms of the ages of respondents, ranges rather than exact ages were collected. Six of twenty-one individuals were in their 20’s, eight in their 30’s, four in their 40’s, two in their 50’s and one in their 60’s.

Six individuals were interviewed with a friend who was also engaged in sex work (i.e. there were three pairs of two). Two of the three pairs interviewed together also worked together.

Table 2: Demographics

G	WK COND	REL	JOB	D U	CHILD	STU	AGE	CHILD SEX EXP	2+ WK COND	INC
F	A	P	Y	N	Y	N	40s	N	Y	N
F	A	P	Y	Y	Y	N	20s	Y	Y	N
F	A									Y
F	A									Y
F	A									Y
F	CW	P	N	N	N	Y	20s	N	N	N
F	IA	S	N	N	N	N	40s	N	N	N
M	IA	P	Y	N	N	N	30s	N	N	N
M	IA	S	N	Y	N	N	20s	N	N	N
M	IA	S	N	Y	N	N	50s	N	Y	N
M	IA	D	Y	N	Y	N	30s	N	N	N
M	IA	S	Y	N	N	N	30s	N	N	N
F	IA									Y
F	IA									Y
F	IA					Y				Y
F	IA/SBA	P	N	Y	N	N	20s	Y	Y	N
F	IO	S	N	N	N	N	30s	Y	Y	N
F	IO	D	N	N	Y	N	40s	N	Y	N
M	IO	D	N	N	Y	N	60s	N	N	N
F	IO	P	N	Y	Y	N	30s	N	N	N
F	IO	S	N	N	N	N	20s	N	N	N
F	IO	S	Y	Y	Y	N	30s	N	N	N
F	IO	P	N	Y	N	N	30s	N	N	N
F	IO									Y
F	IO									Y
F	IO									Y
M	IO	S	Y		N	N	20s	N	N	N
F	SB									Y
F	SB									Y
F	SBA	D	N	Y	Y	N	40s	N	N	N
F	SBA	S	N	Y	Y	N	30s	N	N	N
F	SBO	S	N	Y	N	N	50s	N	N	N

Key: G=Gender: F=Female, M=Male; WK COND=Working Conditions in Sex Work: A=Agency, CW=Cam Work, IA=Independent Alone, IO=Independent with Other Person, SB=Street Based, SBA=Street Based Alone, SBO=Street Based With Other Person; REL=Relationship Status: S=Single, P=Partner, D=Divorced; JOB=Job Other Than Sex Work: Y=Yes, N=No; D U=Drug Use: Y=Yes, N=No; CHILD=Has Children: Y=Yes, N=No; STU=Student: Y=Yes, N=No; AGE=Age Range of Participant; CHILD SEX EXP=Is Survivor of Child Sexual Exploitation: Y=Yes, N=No; 2+ WK COND=Has a History of Two or More Working Conditions in Sex Work: Y=Yes, N=No; INC=Incarcerated at Time of Interview: Y=Yes, N=No

All of the interviewees except one were from Newfoundland; interestingly, the one person who was not a Newfoundlander was a male refugee from Africa.

Two of the respondents had worked in the oil industry in Alberta and recently returned home, and one person had worked in the wine industry in California and also recently returned home to Newfoundland. One person discussed living in Ontario for a number of years and working in the sex industry there as well.

It is important to re-iterate the point here that the purpose of providing this demographic information is not to link “outcomes” to demographic categories, but rather to provide some information as to the wide-ranging working conditions and life circumstances of the individuals involved in this research. As was previously stated, there are no numbers assigned to the interviews or resulting demographic data and the data is presented in order of working condition rather than chronological order of interviews. This ordering is purposeful so that the demographic information cannot be linked to quotes throughout this work.

Concerns were raised by some interviewees that if the demographic information they provided could be linked with quotes, it could possible “out” them to readers, especially if those readers were front-line workers in the community sector in St. John’s. For example, a reader could ascertain a familiar situation from a quote, go to the demographics section and confirm details about the

individual and potentially link the quote to someone they know. Indeed, the community is so small that there was a need to take measures to mediate these concerns; thus, no quote in this work can be linked to demographic information in the table to follow. As well, there was no specific demographic questionnaire used for the same reason – the protection of confidentiality and the comfort of participants was of the utmost importance.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that even though the main purpose of these ‘informal interviews’ was to listen to sex workers ‘talking back’ to stigma, there were occasions when they also, voluntarily, addressed the more traditional Goffmanian concerns about stigma; of how they were treated by ‘normals’, and how they ‘managed’ stigmatizing labels. Of course, my main concern was to examine the institutional discourses that these sex workers resisted, and not to focus on the differences between these sex workers. Nevertheless, for those interested in carrying out a more conventional research project, one could find some isolated instances of data pertaining to certain differences among the various categories of sex workers.⁵¹

⁵¹ These preliminary findings are in line with the discussion in Chapter One, which outlined the important ways in which people are differently positioned within the sex trade and the forms of intersecting stigma they may encounter (pgs. 36-39). As noted, within the literature on sex work stigma, researchers have explored its intersection with various forms of stigma (Levey and Pinsky, 2015), including drug use stigma (Benoit et al., 2019; Orchard et al., 2019; Sallmann, 2010; Scambler & Paoli, 2008), disability stigma (Geymonat, 2019), stigma linked to sexuality – especially for gay men (Koken et al., 2004; Morrison and Whitehead, 2007), trans stigma (Davis et al., 2019; Krusi et al, 2016), and stigma around unconventional gender roles in relationships (Mittal et al., 2018).

For example when individuals in the research did talk about their experiences of enacted stigma, or people exhibiting stigmatizing behaviours or attitudes directly towards them, there was a major divide between those engaged in on-street work (and especially on-street survival sex), and those with the privilege to work indoors. In one instance, when the topic of impacts of stigma came up in conversation, one woman who worked independently indoors noted that she had none,

there's no burden for me...it's not negatively affected my life in any way
(Sam)

In contrast, one of the women engaged in street-based survival sex spoke about her personal experiences with stigma and noted:

Oh yeah, people, of course, they sees me around. And that's even worse, cuz now it's like you're labelled, you're named...(Nikki)

Interestingly, even those who did not cite personal issues around stigma still perceived that society viewed sex workers negatively, even if that perception did not negatively affect their self-perception or lives in any way. One man who was engaging in out-call work and what he named “high-level escorting”, noted that he believes society in general holds stigmatizing views around sex workers:

They think you're a drug addict, you're an alcoholic, you have substance abuse issues, things like that (Tim)

But when asked if that has any negative effect on his life he replied:

Not at all, surprisingly enough. I thought that would, um, it would bother me, but no it don't... I don't find it degrading at all. I don't find it humiliating at all. I think as an adult it's your choice what you choose to do. And if you're ok with your choices then I think that's ok. I pick and

choose who I let into my life, and if they don't understand it for what it really is, then it's not important to me... I'm treated very, very well. With a lot of respect. With a lot of pride and dignity. Treated as I'm gold, basically. (Tim)

As this section has shown, my initial use of traditional (symbolic interactionist-influenced) qualitative methods did produce some interesting insights. However, as one of my primary aims in this project was to examine 'stigma' more from the standpoint of the stigmatised, rather than that of the traditional researcher, my subsequent 'research' took a rather different direction.

Part II: Beyond Traditional Methods; Issues of Trust and Power

As a result of the aforementioned CAR discussion in Chapter Two, I became more explicitly aware of the issues of trust and power in sex work research – and especially of the issue of researchers taking from sex workers for their research without contributing back to the community or providing sex workers with some kind of tangible outcomes from participation in research. In fact, I was extremely pleased when I discovered van der Meulen's serious consideration of these issues, because it eloquently articulated some of the uneasiness I had experienced when I began my project. Nevertheless, CAR did not so much inform my initial research method (as my project had already begun) as it reassured me of the ethical need to take extreme care about issues of "trust" and "exploitation".

I had already begun to question my role in the community I was researching, in part due to my anxiety about being perceived as 'the expert' (as discussed in Chapter Two), even in the early days of the project. In fact, I took issues such as

these so seriously, that after completing my interviews, I actually postponed my research to do the community building that van der Meulen (2011) suggests, but which was not available to me at the start of my research.

Locally, at the time my research project was approved, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador had no services specifically for those working in the sex industry, no advocacy groups fighting for the rights of those involved, and no supports for either those working or those wishing to stop working in the sex industry. Thus, my first step to establishing such services was to contact people involved in the sex industry, to gather information about them and their lives, and to do so in a space of non-judgement and support. While informing service development was not an original goal of my research project, that is the work that I began to carry out, work that then went on to inform and support the development of services for people doing sex work in the province.

In other words, the types of community agencies that lend themselves to the CAR form of research, may well be available in large metropolitan areas, but may be completely unavailable in smaller urban (and rural) areas. That was certainly the case when I started my project, as no sex worker support service existed in NL at the time of the interviews. However, that situation changed in October 2013, when the St. John's Status of Women Council received a donation to start a support program for women involved in sex work. I was hired as program coordinator. In partnership with some of the women who were interviewed for this dissertation, and along with many others, a program was developed that provided individual support, outreach, and opportunities for

collective advocacy for women who do sex work in St. John's. The program was called the "Safe Harbour Outreach Project" (SHOP).

Although SHOP had certainly not been part of my original research design, the development of that organization was, nevertheless, informed by my research interests. Yet, at the time I took that job, I was unable to see this as part of the research process. I saw it as quite separate. With my subsequent engagement with CAR, I now realize that I was also building real trust with vulnerable and marginalized groups. Furthermore, I was actually helping to build the types of community agencies that CAR-informed research relies on, but often takes for granted. Let me explain.

Everything I did within the context of building SHOP, I did as ethically as possible. I stopped researching and conducting interviews as soon as I was offered the opportunity to create SHOP, because I saw it as a striking conflict of interest and ethics to offer a person supportive services and then also ask her for a research interview. After three years with SHOP, I left that program because a strong community of sex workers had formed who could safely take up the work of activism and media presence around sex work in Newfoundland. Through the privilege of working with individuals engaged in sex work over the course of the three years with SHOP, I transitioned from academic, to advocate and activist in the area of sex worker rights, both at the individual and the collective level.

Three years, and 150 participants later, I had gained an in-depth understanding of sex work that would not have been available to me as a conventional researcher today. Long gone are the days when sociologists (and anthropologists) would spend months (if not longer) in 'the field' to come to know the 'culture' of the group they were studying⁵², yet I was able to spend several years in the intimate day to day lives of women engaged in sex work; providing them with individual support and developing opportunities for collective advocacy. By the end of the second year of programming, we had secured funding from the provincial government to expand to a full-time program, with a second employee, in our own space. We also became connected with the sex workers rights movement across Canada, via the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, which prior to SHOP had no representation in Newfoundland and Labrador. The program was built in direct response to what women in the industry said they wanted and needed. People with lived experience were involved in every step of the development of the program.

That program now has two full time staff, a roster of volunteers, many with lived experience, a space exclusively for women who do sex work, and has received sustainable funding from the provincial government to support its operations. SHOP provides intensive individual support and advocacy, community space, meals and opportunities for peer support, as well as organizing many public

⁵² For powerful examples from the past, of sociologists spending long periods of time 'in the field', see Cicourel (1968), Briggs (1970).

events and rallies supporting the rights of people who do sex work. SHOP has also provided anti-stigma training and education to thousands of individuals in Newfoundland, from students, to health care professionals, to ministers, to all front line RNC officers in St. John's. By providing a safe space for sex workers to come together, it has fostered a community of women who do sex work and ignited the local sex workers rights movement in Newfoundland and Labrador. SHOP is active on social media and well connected to the sex workers rights movement across the country, receiving a great deal of support from groups like PACE and Stella; SHOP is also a proud member of the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform.

Furthermore, to a significant extent, my involvement resolves one important dilemma that CAR scholars often face. That is because CAR is very sensitive to the issues of trust and exploitation, these concerns become very practical issues when a CAR-informed researcher comes into a community as an outsider but wants to become treated as a 'temporary' insider. As has been demonstrated here, what was carried out, in my case, was the actual initial facilitation of a community agency, where the issues of trust and exploitation were being treated on an everyday mundane basis, in the actual constitution of the agency.

I did not come in as an 'outsider' to the sex work community in St. John's, because there was no 'community' of sex workers before my arrival. Instead, I was an insider in this 'community agency' from the start, as I had helped construct it. I had helped build something that individuals who had participated

in the earlier interviews, had wanted; a place of their own; their own community service. As one of them had said:

There should be a place for women who do that [sex work]. And I'm not talkin' about a shelter, or friendship house, but somewhere where they can go if they want to get condoms, get a pregnancy test... a safe, non-judgmental place. (Nichole)

This is exactly what SHOP became, along with a place where collective advocacy around the human rights of individuals engaged in sex work could take place.

Thus, in many ways, this involvement not only took the suggestions of Community Action Research seriously, but in some respects went beyond it. That is, by staying in the community and devoting time and effort to community development work and advocacy, the issue of exploitation and trust between myself as a researcher and the community of people engaged in sex work in St. John's was minimized. By staying present and engaged well beyond the life of carrying out the interviews, I avoided the problem of simply taking people's stories for my own academic work, and not giving something back, in return, to those individuals I had studied. In addition, my active involvement, in collaboration with several sex workers, in the design, process and implementation of SHOP as a solution to the lack of services and advocacy in St. John's also deepened trust to a level that is typically unknown in conventional (and CAR-inspired) research methodologies.

Part III: Beyond CAR; From the Community to the Individual

Prior to beginning this research project and long before starting SHOP, I had spent years in the community, volunteering on the ground with grass roots organizations that sometimes came into contact with sex workers. Thus, I was well positioned locally and had the relationships necessary to design my initial research proposal, so as to ensure sensitivity to the local context. However it was from my subsequent experiences 'in the field', and then subsequently with SHOP, that I began to fully realize the seriousness of these issues of 'trust' and 'exploitation' with specific regard to sex work, and which led me, eventually, to van der Meulen's work and beyond.

Yet I had already carried out my interviews before turning to my work in community-building. Those interviews produced powerful insights into sex workers' lives in St. John's. Moreover, as they were conducted as 'informal conversations', their format closely resembled the 'naturally occurring conversation' that ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts routinely analyse to display the 'agentive' nature of individuals. In addition, because of my subsequent work helping to create SHOP, I was not only building on my earlier activism, but I was also immersing myself in the culture of sex workers in St. John's. In fact, in many respects, I was following (albeit somewhat unintentionally) a research methodology that has, in the past, produced powerful analytic insights.

The ethnographic research first pioneered by anthropologists, whereby researchers spent significant amounts of time 'in the field' so as to immerse

themselves in, and become competent, in a culture, was easily transported into sociological analysis. Early research, such as Anderson's (1923) 'The Hobo' solved the insider/outsider problem, by taking advantage of Anderson's life as a 'hobo' to document this culture to a sociological audience. Later ethnographers were often sociological/anthropological outsiders who had significant amounts of work to do to become accepted into a community, but still saw themselves as only temporary insiders (Briggs, 1970). Ethnomethodologists went one step further, by seeking to become so 'culturally competent' in their long-term ethnographic work, that they would be able to document the social world of police officers (Cicourel, 1968), lawyers (Sudnow, 1965), natural scientists (Latour and Woolgar, 1979), as understood by the sense-making practices of the participants themselves.

In a more activist vein, institutional ethnographers have also engaged in long term ethnographic work, often by working at an institution, so as to understand, in specific detail, how an everyday, shared culture comes up against institutional relations of ruling (Diamond 1992; Ng, 1987); and this research is carried out from the embodied perspective of a researcher who is also engaging in 'activist' (in this case, institutional ethnographic) research. Yet, in all these cases, because of the long-term immersion in these fields, the researcher hopes to provide insights into the 'embodied culture' s/he is studying (regardless of whether that is from an insider's or an outsider's perspective).

My long-term immersion in sex-workers' lives occasioned by my position establishing SHOP, meant that I had become 'culturally competent'⁵³ in this milieu, and that I had also helped construct the community agency similar to the ones preferred by CAR. However a crucial difference still separated my situation from typical CAR research. I was not an established scholar coming to a community group to collaborate on a research project together, while at the same time, paying attention to issues of trust and exploitation. Instead, I was a graduate student who had started doctoral research, and then temporarily left that project, to engage more concretely in 'activist' work, because my original methodological perspective had not equipped me to deal with certain issues I found in the field. One possible route forward would have been to abandon my earlier research and start again from a CAR perspective. But that would also have been difficult, as my embodied position was closer to being that of a community activist who was also a (fledgling) scholar, rather than that of an activist scholar coming to collaborate with community activists. Fortunately, as suggested earlier, it was Miller's activist/scholar's approach that allowed me to resolve this dilemma.

Because my research and my scholarship in general have been deeply informed by my initial activism, as well as my subsequent academic education

⁵³ The ethnomethodologists pioneered this concern with 'cultural competence' and the analytic task of displaying how people use that 'cultural competence' to make sense of their shared worlds. In later studies, it got extended so as to include the long immersion that needs to be undertaken to become 'competent' in cultures which are not part of the mundane everyday world. Garfinkel's (1967) turn to studies of 'work' suggest the need for the researcher to spend significant periods of time becoming competent in worlds which are not shared by everyone.

and then my work with SHOP, I was no longer the traditional researcher content to follow standard methodological guidelines. On the other hand, I was not simply a 'community activist' hoping to engage with CAR researchers in future research projects. Instead, I was closer to the hybrid scholar/activist that Miller articulates. To be sure, CAR went beyond traditional methods by its attention to the issues of trust and power that had made me so uneasy; but it was Miller's work that showed me how to address these issues in a way that reflected the standpoint I now occupy; that of an activist and a researcher, someone who understands the politicality of both endeavors.

More concretely, it allowed me to complete my research, by providing me with a methodology that, in many ways, shared the same concerns as CAR-inspired research, but which also allowed me to carry out this project by studying the activism of ordinary individuals, rather than having to wait for them to form a community group before starting my research. That is to say, I was able to use the information from my original interviews to demonstrate the everyday politicality of individual sex workers, as the following subsection will now demonstrate.

Recognizing Resistance: The Varied Forms of Resistance to Sex Worker Stigma

As discussed earlier, Miller's (2000) form of discursive analysis is designed to capture 'underdog' strategies of "talking back", to capture the subterranean

meanings people use in their everyday talk, and to capture how ambiguities⁵⁴ in meaning are strategically utilised. In certain regards, it displays similarities to anthropological work on peasant resistances (Scott, 1985), and to gestural resistances displayed by courtesans in Lucknow (Oldenburg, 1990)⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, Miller's analysis is different in at least one major respect; and that is because of her insistence on paying close attention to the 'naturally occurring' talk that underdogs use. It is via this form of discourse analysis that she can capture these non-traditional forms of resistance. That is, to say, like all those influenced by the ordinary language philosophers,⁵⁶ she accomplishes this by attending to the work that language does within the context of its use.

Moreover, Miller's concern with 'ordinary language' usage, so crucial to the 'discourse analytic' schools of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, Institutional ethnography, etc., also allows me to demonstrate everyday resistance, without the necessity for any technically sophisticated methodological protocols. Just as linguists carry out their work by paying close attention to the everyday utterances of native speakers in order to discover the underlying grammar, Miller's discourse analysis taught me to pay close attention to the everyday utterances of sex workers, in order to reveal certain discursive

⁵⁴ It was the ethnomethodologists who alerted us to the essential indexicality (ie the essential ambiguity) of language use, but it is Miller who insists that this ambiguity is strategically used by underdogs; and thus incorporates it into her theorizing and not just her empirical analyses.

⁵⁵ One might imagine that sex workers would be among the most degraded members of society; Oldenburg, however, provides a different view on the lives of sex workers, a view that is their own, and a view of their lifestyle as a form of resistance to patriarchal society.

⁵⁶ Wittgenstein & Anscombe (1953), and Austin (1962) are hugely responsible for this linguistic turn in the social sciences. Miller's work reflects this influence, albeit indirectly.

features of their grammar. This necessitates respecting the vernacular, and the colloquialisms routinely used by these native speakers, rather than replacing them by terms imported from an analytic or theoretical discourse⁵⁷. Although I do not have the background or expertise in ‘discourse analysis’ that Miller’s work displays, I can, at least document and display some of the findings from my preliminary attempts at this type of research. Specifically, I will show sex workers ‘reverse’, ‘challenge’ and ‘exaggerate’ dominant interpretations so as to engage, often subtly in resistance.

‘Reversing’ Dominant Interpretations

Sex workers in Newfoundland often “talked back” by engaging in reversals of dominant meanings, often by reclaiming subjugated meanings, so that they could be used differently in their own narratives. For example, one young woman who became involved in the sex industry as a child spoke to her own interpretation that, contrary to my/society’s (dominant) interpretation of her experiences as “horrible”, she interpreted her experiences as a critical part of what made her who she is today. She insisted that she felt empowered by overcoming those experiences:

*I was 10 years old when I got tangled up into it [the sex trade].
(Vicky)*

That’s young. (Author)

It is, it’s quite young. But it made me stronger in a way. (Vicky)

⁵⁷ This reversal of typical scholarly practices, might also be seen as an ‘underdog’ strategy carried out by researchers who seriously take up this ‘ordinary language’ perspective.

Well let's talk about that, if you don't mind— 'cuz when we were talking about it on the phone you told me what you were involved in and I said that's really horrible, but you said it wasn't horrible to me, so like, can you talk about what you meant by that? (Author)

Well, like, I could have used my experiences like during the pornography and the pimping ring, like my pimp was not a nice person, the photographer was not a nice person; they were nasty, mean people, they had no problem smacking you up side the face if you didn't do what they said, right? But I could have used those experiences negatively and made myself go downhill even more and go deeper into drugs and deeper into everything to the point where I'd probably be dead. Or I could use it and benefit myself and learn from it. And make myself stronger... I have the power after using what I've been through as positive experiences. I've learned the power to not let people walk over me not let people use me, but still be respectful and caring... like, the person that I am, right! (Vicky)

Here, she reverses the conventional dominant interpretations of the experience of sexual exploitation, and reclaims her experience as the source of her power and as a contributing factor to the respectful, caring person she is today.

Ashley used the same strategy of meaning reversal to challenge the dominant interpretation of a “good mom” as someone who would never be involved with sex work:

My daughter—she keeps me strong. Because when you're a child you don't judge. You don't judge nobody. You don't make conclusions before... you don't read the cover before reading the book. And my daughter she don't judge me. She sees that mommy's this strong, powerful woman who has goals and has morals and respect and virtues. You know? Just because I'm a call girl, that don't mean that I'm not a person as well, right? It don't... becoming a call girl don't make me any different from you or from joe blow down the road. I still bleed the same colour as you. (Ashley)

Aside from resisting the notion that sex workers are not ‘persons’, this young woman is also resisting the notion that sex workers cannot be ‘strong powerful women’. She clarifies this point through a retelling of her daughter’s opinion of

her; as a strong woman with “morals and respect and virtues” – implying that these are the qualities of a good mom.

In this quote, she is also resisting another dominant ‘meaning’ associated with sex work, the idea that engaging in sex work is something that makes a person inherently different, and probably less valuable, than another human being. In stating “I still bleed the same colour as you”, she is in fact resisting a foundational premise of stigma – difference – and in doing so is attempting to reverse a dominant cultural interpretation of sex work. She does this by insisting on sameness through her exact words “Just because I'm a call girl, that don't mean that I'm not a person as well, right?”. Here she is resisting the disparaging and discrediting that comes with stigma and re-affirming her value as a person.

‘Challenging’ Dominant Interpretations

Whereas the above strategy sought to reverse dominant cultural understandings of sex workers (as inadequate mothers, as non-persons) sometimes we see sex workers engage in talk that not so much tries to reverse an interpretation, but rather indirectly (and sometimes directly) challenges such an interpretation. Oftentimes, this challenge is accomplished by proposing a very different understanding of the ‘self’. This re-presentation of the self happens routinely when challenging the dominant cultural understanding of sex workers as victims.

For example, one woman discussed attending a conference, where people with lived experience of sexual exploitation were paired with those without such

experience, and her explicit resistance to victimization discourse is demonstrated below:

*[A]nd the tables were strategically done, and the social worker was there, and she kept saying these poor victims, victims this, victims that, victims everything else, and it was really starting to piss me off, right? So finally, I just kinda let my fork fall on my plate, that made a little movement, little clatter, and what had happened was, there was one young girl on the way to the conference and her pimp found her and killed her and dumped her body in the dumpster. So, I said, she's the victim, we're the survivors, and until you get that straight, like you are fucking useless. To me or anybody else. And she [the social worker] left the table actually. I don't know if she came back yet or not. *laughs*...but yes! Like, that girl at that conference, oh those poor victims, she was pitying us! I'm sat right across the table goin' like fuck you bitch, I'm eatin' the same food you're eatin'! Know what I mean? Ain't no difference, you're no bigger or better than I am.
(Jemma)*

This quote gets at the heart of “talking back” to the victimization discourse around sex work - according to Jemma, in calling someone a victim you are belittling them⁵⁸, as you are denying them the space to self-define their situation and their sense of who they are. Jemma opposes this interpretation with an alternative one; that “we’re the survivors”. In addition, Jemma mentioned that she felt the social worker pitied her. Jemma felt this, then resisted it through her talk by stating that they were both “eating the same food”. This statement is important within the context of its use, as Jemma was referring to food served at a conference with both professionals and non-professionals in attendance. By continuously referring to “poor victims”, the social worker could be seen to be

⁵⁸ Because as Austin (1962) first pointed out, and as the ethnomethodologists/conversation analysts then pursued, people use language to ‘do things with words’, and not just to describe. In this instance, Jemma is hearing the social workers’ discourse not as ‘describing’ sex workers, but as ‘putting them down’.

tacitly asserting her position as saviour/expert. However the fact that they were both eating the same food at that conference is discursively proposed as an equaliser by Jemma. Through this type of utterance, the suggestion is made that they both may have earned a space at the conference. By resisting the victimization discourse and naming it to the social worker, Jemma can be interpreted as resisting the power dynamic inherent in the situation between the professional social worker and herself as a non-professional; in her talk back.

Vicky, cited in the previous section, who stated that she had been exploited as a youth and then re-entered the industry as a consenting adult, spoke about how others framed her experience as a youth, in terms of victimhood, and how at odds it was with her own feelings around her circumstances. She spoke of a certain amount of media involvement and I asked:

Did you feel like the media painted an accurate picture of what went on? (Author)

Yes and no. They made me look out to be this vulnerable victim, you know? This horror case... (Vicky)

Is that what you felt like? (Author)

No! Because what I had been through made me strong. It didn't make me a victim. It made me strong. I'm too determined and too stubborn to become a victim. To sit there and go 'oh boo hoo me', you know? I'm being forced to do this or do that, you know? No! That's not me! I'm an adult now, I'm choosing to do this. I may not be choosing for the 'right' reasons—because I gotta pay bills and shit like that, you know... other people, they'd get another job. They'd work part time and a full-time job. I tried that. I can't, because I'm never there for my daughter. Some people enjoy what they're doing; me, personally, there's sometimes I enjoy it, but most times I'm just doing it for the money, just to get by, just to get ahead. I'm an independent woman. (Vicky)

In this example, we see how Vicky's relationship to sex work is inherent in her sense of self. The independence that work affords her, she implies, is central to who she is. Moreover, she not only challenges, but outrightly rejects the victimization discourse the media had thrust upon her. Even though she had experienced exploitation, she had resisted the victim identity and now was explicitly "challenging" it, stating that even her negative childhood experiences in the sex trade made her who she is - a strong, independent woman.⁵⁹

'Exaggerating' Dominant Interpretations

Perhaps one of the more subtle strategies used by sex workers is when they actually played into a dominant interpretation, but then exaggerated it so as to unsettle the client. The result, sometimes, is that power dynamics are momentarily reversed. For example, one young woman from Newfoundland spoke about how she deals with violent clients. She noted that many women would interpret her situation from the outside and say that she was raped and was a victim. In her mind, by playing into the stigma of "overly sexualized woman" she was able to turn the power around in her favour:

It is hard at times because they're paying you for your time, so it's not like you can be like "Hey! Like fuck off!" kinda thing. I've had violent tricks come in and they're like "I'm gonna break your neck, I'm gonna slap you around", stuff like that, and I look at them and I just kinda giggle. I do, I laugh about it, because... what have I not been though?

⁵⁹ Another thing to note about these stories is how at odds they are with the radical feminist philosophy about sex workers as victims. When that dominant understanding forms the basis of research, the space for individuals to resist this interpretation, by reversing its meaning, or by outrightly challenging it, is shut down. When sex workers are already pre-defined as victims, regardless of how they imagine or express themselves, there is little space to construct an alternative sense of self by 'talking back' to this 'dominant understanding'.

*If a trick is gonna rape ya, instead of giving him the upper hand and the power, to rip off your clothes and force you to do it, be like hang on now, hold on a minute, I don't wanna get my clothes ruined and I wanna enjoy this too. We're gonna do it anyways, I wanna enjoy this too. Right? Cuz that catches them off guard. Because their goal is that fear. So, if you go hold on a minute, I wanna enjoy some of this... they're like "What the fuck is she sayin!?! I've never raped someone and they've said that!" So they lose interest in ya. Right? You're no longer that fun, exciting thrill that they're chasing! So then, instead of them having balls... I have the balls (**Sarah**)*

This example is in line with Miller's story about Joanne in the treehouse outlined in the previous chapter. In that story, Joanne played into feminine stereotypes to resist gender boundaries.

Here, Sarah plays into the "whore stigma" - the idea that she wants sex - to take back the power in a situation where her sexuality and sex would have been violated. By first playing into the decidedly feminine "whore stigma", she informs us that she became the person with the power in her situation, as she demonstrated via the masculine imagery of her "having the balls". This talk, again, disrupts stigmatizing ideas about the power dynamics in sex work interactions, as the idea of the sex worker as powerless is proven to have exceptions.

In addition, traditional notions of resistance might well have suggested that Sarah fight back or try and gain power in a more overt or obvious way. Instead, what is displayed here is the precariousness and nuances of the situation, and how Sarah uses that ambiguity to resist in a much more subtle, underhanded way. She still gets the upper-hand, but she does so by playing into stigma, and making it look like she is playing into the wishes of her potential abuser. But the

alternative interpretation available is that she understands his motives and what drives him (i.e. the thrill of the chase) and therefore uses that knowledge to play him.

In another case, a woman recounted how she dealt with a situation where her abusive husband found out she was engaged in escort work. He accused her of doing that work because she was a “slut”, but she responded, initially, by saying that she was doing it for the money, as he was not working. Furthermore, she argued that people paid her for her time, sexual acts were an extra charge, and that really, she only provided accompaniment to some of her clients as there was not always a physical aspect involved. Regardless of the efficacy of this explanation, the husband later tried to stage a threesome with his wife and a co-worker so as to embarrass her and control that aspect of her life.

Here again, however, the situation was resisted by her playing into the role and exaggerating it. That is to say, she dealt with the situation by playing into the “whore” stereotype he was using on her and taking the power from him as a result.

What my ex-husband did was to call the escort service when I was at work, and I came home from work and there was this big blanket out in front of the living room. I said, “What are you doing? You got wine out! Are you surprising me with something?” “Yeah!” “Oh cool, what is it?” “Oh, you can’t peek yet, you can’t peak!” I’m like “ooook”. He said, “I got some movies in there for ya”, I was like “What kind of movies?” “Porn.” I said “I don’t watch porn, I don’t like it”. He said he had some coolers, some munchies and there was something else behind the curtain he wanted me to have. I’m like “What”? “Oh, I can’t tell ya!” well he said “I’m gonna come out in about ten minutes.” I walk in the room and there’s my coworker sitting there. “What the hell are you doing here!?!” well she said, “somebody called and paid me

*\$200 to come see you". I'm like really? Well I said "You know what, this is? I know exactly what this is, damn, he thinks he's gonna get off. Doesn't he know that's not what we do?" I said "it's not up to us to get him off, he don't get it." she said "What do you want to watch?" I said, "I don't know, let's see what's on tv". And we sat there for two hours watching tv. And I never called him in. He was there, and you kept hearing ahemmmmm hmmmmm from the kitchen *laughs* and we were sat there saying to each other "How does that feel baby? Oh, that feels just fine!" ...Son of a Bitch! (Anna)*

In this instance, the woman slyly played into the trap that was set up for her, while at the same time taking back power from her husband. In fact, she played into him calling her a "slut", by exaggerating the 'slut' persona so as to suggest she was actually having sexual relations with the woman he invited over. But then she went even further with the exaggeration to suggest her full acceptance of this identity. That is to say, she made him think he was right about her promiscuity, but she did not give him the satisfaction of benefiting sexually from his allegation of "sluttiness". So, instead of resisting in an overt way by responding in anger or asking the other woman to leave, which could have escalated the situation, Anna cleverly turned the tables on what the evening was supposed to be about.

To conclude, what has been demonstrated here, albeit in a very preliminary fashion, are some of the discursive strategies used by underdogs (in this case, sex workers themselves) to resist dominant understandings that oppress them. I will finish this chapter by pointing out that these preliminary findings have also tried to resist and challenge dominant sociological understandings of the sex worker. That is to say, the symbol of 'the prostitute' is important in Anna's story, as it elicits conventional (and dominant) understandings of the limits "of

acceptable female behaviour” (Jeffrey, 2002, p. 143).⁶⁰ Unfortunately, some sociological theorizing parallels that conceptualization.⁶¹ In contrast, this chapter has tried to suggest, albeit in a preliminary fashion, an opposing conceptualization of the sex worker as a complex subject who is simultaneously stigmatized but yet strategically resistant to the dominant cultural understandings that we all inhabit. S/he cannot resist all the time, as s/he understands her everyday ‘underdog’ position, one in which she may possess little power. Nevertheless, as this chapter has attempted to show, from time to time, s/he employs a number of discursive strategies to ‘talk back’. That infrequent, but well-timed usage of these discursive strategies also demonstrates the ‘artful’ agency of these individuals.

⁶⁰ Themes around the imposition of definitions onto the lives of those whose identities are ‘wounded’ are also present here, as Doezema (2001) critiques particular types of feminist theory that construct sex work as always harmful, and thus colonize the experiences of sex workers with discourses of harm and victimization.

⁶¹ Most obviously, radical feminist thinking that often sees sex workers as ‘victims’ because it prioritizes certain forms of sexual behavior (eg loving egalitarian relationships), and seeing others as problematic, and in need of assistance.

Preface: Publication One

Publication One uses Millerian analysis to examine sex workers' talk, which emphasizes structural aspects of stigma such as religion and other relations of power. This analysis occurs in relation to the cultural locatedness of sex work stigma in St. John's, Newfoundland, which sex workers indignantly conceptualized as the juxtaposition of ignorance coupled with moral judgement. In this chapter, sex workers "talked back" not only to stigma, but also resisted the power of the church as a structural institution.

This work is published in Durisin, van der Meulen and Bruckert's (2018) *Red Light Labour*, an edited collection dealing with legal, policy and social analysis of sex work in Canada. The current work appears in "Part 2 – Diverse Experiences: Examining Places, Spaces, and Types of Work"; it was initially pitched as capturing sex worker's perspectives on stigma in the unique social location of St. John's, Newfoundland.

This publication is co-authored with Dr. Gayle MacDonald. Laura Winters conducted the research for this piece and wrote 90% of the content of the chapter. Dr. MacDonald provided support through editing the chapter in preparation for publication.

Publication One, Hypocrisy in “Sin City”: Space, Place and Sex Work Stigma in St. John’s, NL

Laura Winters & Gayle MacDonald

Intro

In comparison to the rest of the country, including the three other provinces that comprise Atlantic Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador is a place unto itself. The island nation joined Canada in 1949, but a fierce spirit of separateness remains on “The Rock.” Newfoundlanders have a strong sense of attachment to place, a distinctive cultural identity, and provincial cultural nationalism (Statistics Canada, 2015). Cultural specificity is reflected in the dialect of the province, colourful language, resilient family attachments, and pride in knowing one’s neighbours. Unique to St. John’s as a capital city is its small population size, which is only 55 percent of Halifax’s population (Statistics Canada, 2016). The context of social and spatial proximity in Newfoundland produces unique experiences of sex work. What can sex workers in Newfoundland teach us about selling sex in environments where everyone knows your name? And your business?

This chapter draws on thirty-two interviews that Laura Winters conducted in 2013 with women and men sex workers in and around St. John’s. Participants engaged in a wide variety of sex work, including street-based, massage, escorting independently or through agencies, dancing, and webcam performance. Many stated that they were happy with their jobs, whereas some

expressed the desire to change their situation or status. Two women self-identified as survivors of child sexual exploitation and reported experiencing exploitation and/or trafficking as youth. Other participants had significant economic privilege and left high-paying jobs to engage in sex work.

To access people working in many types of sex work, diverse sampling methods were used, including posters placed in the washrooms of community organizations and other public spaces, as well as in two massage parlours and an erotic dance club's dressing room. Information about the research project was posted on three websites where workers advertise sexual services, and some participants were referred by community organizations. Other participants learned about the project through word of mouth. The interviews were qualitative, open-ended, and participant-driven; they framed sex workers as the experts of their own lives. The interview transcripts were analyzed using Miller's (2000) method of discourse analysis, which examines routine talk as a "claims making enterprise". The research process was presented both as an opportunity for sex workers to "talk back" (Jeffrey and MacDonald, 2006) to the ideas and perceptions that others hold about them and their lives and as a platform for sex workers to articulate their understanding of the world around them and their place in it.

With regard to judgment of sex work, the "whore stigma" is well documented (Pheterson, 1996) and positions the sex worker "outside" of the normative boundaries of "proper" sexual behaviour. Stigma is an attribute that is deeply discrediting and usually attached to norm infractions, resulting in the devaluation

of the person (Goffman, 1963). In what follows, we outline some of the factors identified by research participants that contribute to the stigmatization of sex work in St. John's and reflect on their experiences of that stigma. Interestingly, sex workers felt that the general public held the seemingly conflicting belief that sex work did not happen in Newfoundland, while still passing judgment on and stigmatizing those who engage in it. This binary of willful blindness and moral intolerance is a theme throughout this chapter that, according to participants, is rooted in religion.

“Open Your Eyes”: Perceived Public Ignorance of the Sex Industry

I can guarantee you, someone who lives on either side of you has either paid for it or done it themselves. People are just ignorant to it. (Participant #25: female; street-based work)

Research in other parts of Atlantic Canada has found that people who do sex work perceive the public to harbour negative attitudes towards both them and their work (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006). This was certainly the case in Newfoundland; however, interestingly, the sex workers interviewed also expressed that much of the general public considers sex work to be something that happens only on “the mainland” (i.e., the rest of Canada) or in “big cities” like Toronto, Montreal, or even Halifax:

It's not a very open-minded city...you can't compare it to Toronto or Montreal; it's been embedded there for years. They [sex workers in those places] have their own communities, it's still on the Q T [quiet] here. it's slow in catching up and opening up, right? That'll come in time. (Participant #7: male; independent indoor work)

Many participants expressed that “if people just opened their eyes” they would see that there is a thriving sex industry in the city.

*There's lots of shit going on in this city that the majority of people don't know or don't care to know. They don't want to know. They don't want to know because if you wanted to know and wanted to get involved in your community, all you gotta do is open your eyes.
(Participant #5: female; independent escort work)*

The willful blindness of the public to sex workers is reflected in the refusal of governmental agencies to acknowledge sex work in the province. In 2011 the provincial government commissioned a community agency to do a study on youth identified as sexually exploited (Community Youth Network–St. John's and CASEY, 2011) only to subsequently refuse to release it and to prevent community members involved from speaking publicly about the issue (CBC News, 2013). A request via the Access to Information Act resulted in the release of a redacted version of the report four years later (CBC News, 2015). By suppressing these findings, the government appears to be stating that “this doesn't happen here”, reinforcing the willful blindness around the sex industry in the province.

Although the consensus opinion was that the residents of St. John's were naive about the realities of the sex industry, this finding certainly did not mean that stigma was not an issue or that people were unconcerned about the ramifications of being outed in their communities. These preoccupations were compounded by the cultural specificities of St. John's as well as the size of the city. In what follows, participants speak at length about what St. John's small size means for them and their work.

“Who's Your Father?” The Impact of Social and Spatial Proximity

So, it was this girl, Amy, [that got me involved in sex work], and

another girl Linda, and Linda was from same place I was from, and Amy, I knew Amy's two brothers... I said, "Amy you better not tell nobody, man," she said "Will ya do it?" I said, "Fuck yes!" (Participant #9: male; street-based work)

The quotation above highlights the interconnectedness of social circles in St. John's. Having grown up in small-island cultures ourselves (i.e., Newfoundland and Cape Breton, respectively), the authors know that when meeting individuals of similar age, it is common to realize that you have shared acquaintances. Some of the participants jokingly asked the researcher, "Who's your father?" It is a common question in small Newfoundland communities, as people often identify shared relatives or acquaintances. These intimate interpersonal webs can pose problems for sex workers (see also Hannem, this collection). The men and women in this dissertation reported that they felt vulnerable to being outed to friends and family, especially when working outdoors. The same man quoted above was outed as a sex worker to his community and subsequently discovered the identity of the individual who shared the information:

I was down sellin' myself and someone from the same place where I live in saw me get in a car and followed us down by the fuckin' lake. And saw buddy giving me head and passing me money. And it took a long time for me to figure out how this person knew. Bastard wouldn't come right out and say it to me, he was tellin' people, and it was coming back to me second-hand news. And I finally found out who it was, and he lived in the same community as me. (Participant #9: male; street-based work)

Several women spoke about being outed to friends, family, and their community. One woman noted that her mother became aware of her work from someone in the community:

My mom's a social worker and she asked me about it one day. So

somehow it got to her. Nothing ever came out openly through me, but somehow it got to her that that was something I was doing, and she asked me about it. And I was like that's bullshit, that's people, because I'm a junkie they're sayin' I'm at that. I flipped out, basically, denying it. (Participant #16: female; street-based work)

The level of familiarity and closeness of the community also increased the likelihood that participants would “run into” clients outside of work:

Go to Walmart or wherever, you'd always run into the guy and his wife and feel...[pausing] I would just look at him and half smile and go on. You know? ...Make sure the wife didn't see! (Participant #5: female; independent escort work)

A woman who was working online doing web-cam shows noted that clients started trying to find her in her “real life” based on the fact that she was from St. John's, and eventually took steps to protect her identity.

I made the mistake when I first joined [the web-cam website] to say I was from St. John's. So, I started getting people, like within the first week of me joining, asking “do you go to MUN? Do you go to CONA?”⁶² All those kinds of questions. I instantly changed it to “Oh I live in Eastern Canada” and when I'm talking about the time zone of when my usual show times are, I used just Eastern Standard Time. (Participant #18: female; web cam work)

Another male sex worker was so concerned about confidentiality that he agreed to participate in the interview only after being assured that it would be transcribed, and the data erased immediately afterward. Despite the need for discretion and problems posed by familiarity, he also spoke of security advantages of the small-city context:

St. John's is a small town, so there's ways to research the person you're going to see. And you know, there's a way to just basically

⁶² MUN refers to Memorial University of Newfoundland, and CONA refers to College of the North Atlantic, Newfoundland and Labrador's public college.

investigate a little bit before I sort of jump into any situation... I have to be comfortable and my security and safety is number one... If I pass a client in public somewhere, especially if I was with my kids or whatever, "they don't know me, and I don't know them." (Participant #19: male; independent escort work)

Although the size of St. John's offers those engaged in sex work some security advantages, it also imposes a lack of anonymity that can lead to stigma, discrimination, and violence (WHO et al., 2013). Sex workers' experiences of stigma are explored in the following section, where participants discuss its perceived religious roots.

"Holier Than Thou": Sex Work Stigma, Family, and Religiosity

As is the case with sex workers in the rest of Canada, the Newfoundlanders in this dissertation project spoke extensively about the stigma associated with the sex industry (Bruckert, 2012; Lazarus et al., 2012). A woman engaged in street-based sex work spent much of her interview talking about her family, which was her principal source of support, and about the impact of stigma:

Well I come from a good family, my father and mother were very mad, they don't want to see me down around there [on the stroll] like that... People, of course, they sees me around and that's even worse, cuz now it's like you're labeled, you're named... They know who you are basically... I lost a lot of friends and mom and dad are so mad, they hates letting me in [their house], because they don't want me down around here whatsoever. (Participant #14: female; street-based work)

Family ties are strong in Newfoundland and being ostracized by family would be devastating for many research participants. For some, it would mean being cut off from their only means of financial, emotional, and social support; for others, it could result in homelessness and alienation from their community. One of the

sex workers who was working independently indoors recounted that her father joked about being labelled as a client when seen in public with her – although, in her words, he was “only half joking”:

I was giving him [dad] a kiss and a hug gettin' out [of his car], and he was like “Jesus! Don't let anybody see you hug me! They'll take my picture and I'll be on the front page of the Evening Telegram”... they'll have me labeled as a John!” (Participant #15: female; independent indoor work)

A number of participants expressed that they would be open about their work if not for the impact of stigma on their families, often noting that they kept their work hidden not to protect themselves but to protect family members. In discussions of stigma, a theme emerged around the impact of religion on public perceptions of sex work. Laura, as both a researcher and a resident of St. John's, can attest that the effects of religion are felt in Newfoundland in ways that they may not be in other cities in Canada. For example, until secular public schools were established in 1997, the Catholic Church had a full monopoly over the school system (Rollmann, 1999). Participants spoke about the lingering influences, especially in relation to family and “Catholic guilt”:

I feel there's a lot of guilt too around my grandmother. I was born and raised Catholic, and she's Catholic. It's just like if she knew what I was doing [...] a lot of guilt, because of what I'm doing, and I always think, like every day, what if my grandmother could see me now? I can't see my grandmother ever, like not talking to me or disowning me, but just knowing, she would be disappointed in me, you know? (Participant #4: male; independent indoor work)

Other research participants noted similar experiences.

St. John's, it's Sin City, I'm sorry, stuff happens... My Mom is Catholic and if she found out... I would be kicked out of the family.

Nope, don't have a son, sorry. So, when I do get a client I kinda screen them so it's - I don't know you, you don't know me, perfect...This is the whole Catholic thing...I think that's half the reason we have such high STI rates too... Catholics don't need condoms! [laughs] Right? And the Catholic brothers don't have any problems!" (Participant #1: male; independent indoor work)

Although the perceived judgment that the Catholic mother (and presumably other Catholics) would level at sex workers is noted, the quotation above also “talks back” to the general public and the Catholic Church. “Sin City” is a common nickname for St. John’s that nods to the hypocrisy of people who would judge sex workers based on religious convictions but also engage in “illicit” sexual activities themselves. This reference to “Sin City” brings us back to the twin pillars of willful blindness and moral judgment by highlighting the tensions between two versions of St. John’s: the quaint, family-friendly place depicted in tourism ads; and the reality of St. John’s as a city where “immoral” activities are part of the fabric of life.

The reference to the “Catholic Brothers” evokes the scandal of the Mount Cashell Orphanage, a foster home that for decades was the site of physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by the Christian Brothers against the boys who were entrusted to their care (Harris, 1991). Several participants referred to this scandal while describing religious judgment and the perceived hypocritical stance of the church toward sex, implying that Catholics should not judge sex workers given the lengthy history of abuse in the local churches. At the time of the scandal, the willful blindness of St. John’s residents was coupled with rampant religious morality and superiority. In employing references to local religious scandal as parlance for the hypocrisy of sexual stigma, sex workers

were resisting not only the beliefs of the church regarding sex but also the right of anyone to judge them based on those beliefs. Such nuances highlight the cultural specificity embedded in sex work research and the importance of researchers' ability to interpret what is said within the context of shared cultural knowledge.

Conclusion

Although it may seem that the sex workers involved in this dissertation were hiding in the shadows, invisibilized by the denial that sex work happens in Newfoundland, many of them used the space of the interview to communicate that they are valuable members of society who deserve to be acknowledged and heard. The research participants' narratives mirrored those of sex workers across Canada (Benoit and Shaver, 2006; Lewis, Shaver, and Maticka-Tyndale, 2013; O'Doherty, 2007) in their resistance to stigma and judgment, whether grounded in religion or otherwise (Winters, 2016), and in their desire to have meaningful conversations about themselves and their work, the very thing that stigma prevented them from doing:

It makes me want to educate them, it makes me what to tell them my life - who I was and where I came from so that they'd be better educated, and have a better understanding of it, then they could tell someone else, someone else and someone else and before you know it, the whole world got a better understanding of it. (Participant #16: female; independent indoor work)

Sex workers interviewed in Newfoundland expressed their desire to use their experience to make change and to challenge moralistic views of sex work. The Safe Harbour Outreach Project (SHOP), a local sex worker support, advocacy,

and outreach service that formed after the completion of the interviews, has been fighting to create a space for sex workers to engage in that desired public resistance. On International Sex Worker Rights Day in March 2016, SHOP and the City of St. John's partnered to create an exhibition showcasing sex workers' voices entitled *Sex Workers Speak Out: Coast to Coast Perspectives about Canada's Harmful Laws* (Bradbury, 2017; Crocker, E., 2017). The exhibit provided sex workers an opportunity to take control of the narrative around sex work in their city and to publicly "talk back" to stigma. This drastic shift from the situation only three years earlier, where the provincial government refused to publicly acknowledge that sex work happens in Newfoundland, demonstrates the value of having an advocacy organization for sex workers and the power of the collective voices of sex workers in creating social change (see also Beer, this collection).

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Preface: Publication Two

Publication Two examines how sex workers resist by talking back to professional discourses such as ‘harm reduction’ as a form of power-relations. This focus on relations of power allows us to see how ‘misrecognition’, which involves status subordination resulting in lack of full citizenship, is a better way to understand stigma.

Sex workers’ ‘talk back’ to harm reduction suggests that it is the socio-political and legal context of sex work that causes the greatest harms to those involved. Traditional understanding of harm reduction is expanded to include stigmatizing ideologies that negate sex workers’ abilities to define themselves, their lives, and their work, as a source of violence and harm.

Further, this publication is concerned with how sex workers challenge other dominant discourses, especially of victimization. It does this at the macro (parliamentary) and micro (St. John’s) level, by juxtaposing professional and academic discourses that prioritize a notion of ‘victimhood’, with the everyday discourse of sex workers, who prioritize a discourse centered on ‘work’.

This single-authored publication appears in Smith and Marshall’s (2016) *Critical Approaches to Harm Reduction: Conflict, Institutionalization, (De-) Politicization and Direct Action*. It appears in Part Three of the book, titled “Critical Harm Reduction Theory/Philosophy: Depoliticization, Direct Action, and Drug/Service Users’ Experiential Knowledge”. It was placed under that heading due to the prioritization of sex workers’ voices throughout the work.

Publication Two, Everything About Them, without Them: Sex Work and the Harms of Misrecognition

Introduction: Harm Reduction and Sex Work

It is frequently assumed that sex workers cannot be knowers in the sense of being able to present a critical analysis of their lives. It is this silencing of their critical consciousness that lies at the base of their greatest oppression. This silencing has denied sex workers full citizenship and full humanity (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006, p. 1).

The extension of the philosophies and practices of harm reduction⁶³ from drug use to sex work is not a novel endeavour; the fact that sex workers can benefit from harm reduction principles has been well documented academically (Cusick, 2006; MacDonald, Jeffrey, Martin, & Ross, 2013; Rekart, 2005), and community-based sex worker organizations in Canada, especially those run by sex workers, have been practicing harm reduction with their participants for decades⁶⁴. The extrapolation of harm reduction to the area of sex work is a logical move given the vast variability in the lived reality of sex workers—a harm reduction approach recognizes that there is a plethora of lived experiences in sex work, and all people deserve supports whether or not they are willing, or able, to stop doing sex work. To this tenet, I would add that any discussion of

⁶³ This work appears as a chapter in a book on harm reduction. The concept of Harm Reduction is not defined here, as it is defined elsewhere in the book. The working definition of harm reduction introduced in chapter one of that collection is: “Any positive change as a person defines it for him or herself” (Campbell, p. 8), and the practice of making as many options for positive change available as possible.

⁶⁴ Exemplary organizations include Stella, Maggie’s, PACE, and Stepping Stone, all harm reduction-oriented front-line services for sex workers in the cities of Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Halifax, respectively (Big Susie’s, 2015).

harm reduction and sex work must take into account that sex work is not an inherently harmful endeavour, and it is the socio-political and legal context of this work that causes the greatest harms to those involved; failure to do so places blame on the individual for unsafe working conditions created by unconstitutional laws surrounding sex work (PIVOT, 2014). This assertion is supported by studies of sex work in decriminalized contexts such as New Zealand, where sex workers have reported greater overall health and wellbeing (Crichton, 2015). In this chapter, I unpack the harmful stereotypes that shape these contexts: stigma is important and has very real effects for the lives of sex workers in Canada. The problem at hand is stigma, and the ways that ideologies around sex work contribute to or combat that stigma.

This chapter also links the structural aspects of stigma (for example, the institutionalized stigma inherent in sex work laws) to subjectivity. The concept of misrecognition (Fraser, 2003) is employed here to theoretically address the structural aspects of stigma, and the concept of resistance is used to demonstrate the relationship between stigma and subjectivity, as articulated by people who do sex work.⁶⁵ From a more grounded perspective of harm reduction practice, this chapter expands the traditional understanding of harm reduction to include stigmatizing ideologies that negate sex worker's abilities to define themselves, their lives, and their work, as a source of violence and harm.

⁶⁵ This concept of resistance does not only operate against the community understandings of stigma (as articulated in Publication One), but also against the sociological understandings of stigma (Goffman; as outlined in ~Publication Three), as resistance as a response to stigma goes beyond the idea of stigma management.

The victimization/trafficking discourse and the expanding rescue industry (Agustin, 2007) it drives are great sources of harm for Canadian sex workers as a collective group (PIVOT, 2014). Combatting these flawed ideologies is the most important form of harm reduction available to those who wish to further human rights and reduce harms for people who do sex work. The social conditions necessary for mutual recognition, as outlined by Fraser (2003), offer a good starting point for these endeavours.

This chapter calls for a de-individualization of harm reduction, a shift from the focus of the individual and their actions as the source of harm to the discourses that drive the legal, political, and cultural landscapes of sex work as that which is truly detrimental. Nowhere is this more evident than in the current context of sex work in Canada.

Background: Situating Sex Work and Harm Reduction on “the Rock”

As stated above, sex worker outreach organizations in Canada have been engaging with people who do sex work from a harm reduction perspective for many years (Maggie’s, 2015; PACE, 2015; Stella, 2015; Stepping Stone, 2015), as it allows organizations to “move beyond moralistic politics and try to negotiate a more nuanced and complex response to sex work based on sex workers’ own experiences” (MacDonald et al., 2013). From this approach, organizations can support sex workers to make safer choices, rather than requiring them to stop working in order to avail themselves of services (as is the case with “exiting programs”, or programs which exist only for people who are able to stop doing sex work or “exit” the industry). Prior to October 2013, no such service existed in

NL. Sex workers in the province had much to say about the absence of such a service:

There should be a service for women who are doing on street...and I'm not talkin' about a shelter, or friendship house, but somewhere where they can go if they want to get condoms, get a pregnancy test, a safe, non-judgmental place. (Lisa)⁶⁶

The notion of establishing a non-judgmental space specifically intended for sex workers formed a central, recurrent theme in the interviews, as participants in the NL study spoke of avoiding certain community and governmental services due to discrimination by staff, as well as the fact that some had experiences being turned away from shelters simply because they were sex workers. Having provided direct support to over 100 sex workers over three years at SHOP, an outreach program formed shortly after the completion of these interviews, I would fully support this statement.

While accompanying women to medical and other appointments, as well as navigating systems such as social services, I witnessed many instances of discrimination; from the methadone doctor who judgmentally asked a SHOP participant how she made her money to support her drug use, to the government official who showed up at the outset of our bad date⁶⁷ reporting service to ensure none of her department's money was being spent on "those women", to the social services worker who wouldn't place a homeless woman in a hotel (standard practice in the province when shelter beds are full) because

⁶⁶ Names changed to protect anonymity of interview participants.

⁶⁷ Aka – violent client

“we all know what she’s going to do in there”, there were many instances where women were judged, discriminated against, and even denied basic human rights such as shelter or health care because they were known sex workers. Of course, this is not to say that there were not compassionate and understanding individuals working in community and governmental services, notably the social services worker I had on speed dial who bent the rules of the system every day to meet the needs of our participants.

Based on the lived experiences of the over 30 people involved in this dissertation, the state of sex work harm reduction services at the time of research in NL was dire; there was nowhere they could go to avail themselves of supports (for example safety planning around street work) tailored specifically for sex workers, and nowhere that guaranteed they would receive non-judgmental service once sex worker status was disclosed. Further to this, many spoke about the general public’s lack of knowledge around sex work, and the denial that it even happens in NL.

People turn a blind eye to it here; they try to close their eyes to it, they try to think that no, child prostitution, sex trade, none of it’s going on in my backyard. But really, if they look out their window, they would probably see a worker. You know? And they will just keep making up excuses, saying ah, that’s not a worker, that’s someone out picking up recyclables or some shit, right? Accept the fact of what’s going on in your own community, in your own family, and in your own province, and if you accept it and try to find a way to [pause] even if you can’t support it morally, find a way to understand it. Sit down if you see a call girl or a street worker walking the streets and it’s a cold winter’s night, grab a coffee or a hot chocolate or something, be like ‘Here, it’s not much, but it will keep you warm’—you know? Like that little bit of caring can make the world of a difference. (Charlotte)

Based on my own anecdotal evidence, I would fully corroborate what this young woman had to say; although I did not widely advertise the fact that I was engaged in sex work research, during personal conversations, when the topic came up, by far the most common response was “what sex trade?” As there was no group advocating for the rights of sex worker in the province, sex work was not something that was widely discussed in the media; national conversations happening at the time related to sex work law reform rarely made the local news. Newfoundland is an island off the east coast of Canada and has always been a culturally isolated place (Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015), much more so before the advent of the internet, and the idea that this place is “behind the times” in many ways was also articulated by those interviewed. One man who was a self-identified cross-dresser, identifying as a man when not working but a woman when engaging in sex work, discussed the vast differences between services and supports available to members of the community here and in Toronto.

*When I was in Toronto, they had a cross dressers group [for sex workers] that helped other couples. Their husbands wanted to have help shopping; they had it set up to take the husbands shopping, and they would have little garden parties in courtyards. They're so far ahead on that kind of stuff... one of these days we will catch up!
(Ben)*

Indeed, when it comes to the types of peer support discussed in this quote, as well as the community building required to develop such programs, Newfoundland is far behind the times in comparison to larger Canadian cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal. The province was also behind the times in terms of sex work research, as this dissertation was the first academic

research with sex workers in the province of NL. As there is a lack of local research on harm reduction and sex work, it is necessary to examine what other researchers in Canada say about the field.⁶⁸

In a review of literature on the topic of sex work and harm reduction, Rekart (2005) states:

Sex work is an extremely dangerous profession. The use of harm-reduction principles can help to safeguard sex workers' lives in the same way that drug users have benefited from drug-use harm reduction. Sex workers are exposed to serious harms: drug use, disease, violence, discrimination, debt, criminalization, and exploitation (child prostitution, trafficking for sex work, and exploitation of migrants) (p. 2123).

The results of Rekart's review show that the harm reduction principles associated with drug use are mapped directly onto sex work, and that it is framed in the literature as an inherently harmful occupation. As well, the harms researched centre on the person doing sex work and are implied to be direct consequences of the work itself—note that the entry begins with the explicit assertion that sex work is dangerous. We also see the reinforcement of much of what is inherent in sex work stigma: sex workers as the vectors of disease, sex workers as drug users, victims, criminals, etc. (Benoit & Shaver, 2006). The overall theme of the body of sex work harm reduction research reviewed here can be surmised in the idea that sex workers need harm reduction because sex work is bad. Rekart (2005) concludes by discussing the cycle of “Vulnerability, a

⁶⁸ The research for this dissertation was located only on the island portion of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador; it is notable that the mainland portion of the province, Labrador, is an area of Canada where no research has been done with sex workers, and where no sex worker supportive services exist.

risky environment, sex work harms, and diminished quality of life” (p. 2130) that he concludes is experienced in sex work and suggests that an objective of harm reduction should be to “enable sex workers to eventually leave prostitution” (p. 2130). Totalizing statements such as this miss the point that there is no one truth about sex work, and that exiting sex work is not a desirable outcome for many who engage in it. The conclusion stated is indicative of the fact that much of the sex work harm reduction literature reviewed by Rekart is not sex-worker centric; that is to say, the research topics and goals are set by those concerned with traditional conceptualizations of harm reduction, meaning that much of the research is centred around concerns not with the overall wellbeing of sex workers, but with specific public health issues such as HIV rates, STI rates, rates of drug use, etc. This is also an issue in the literature around drug use and harm reduction, as the structural dimensions of harm reduction are often not recognized by public health definitions and interpretations. Roe (2005), differentiates between

...[T]hose who see harm reduction primarily as a medical means of promoting health and mitigating the harm to the individual, and a more activist group who see it as a platform for broader and more structural social change (p. 244).

What the individualistic approach misses is the role of harm reduction in addressing the sex work stigma and the harmful ideologies that drive it. Sex workers in other parts of Canada have named stigma as the worst part of their jobs, the most harmful part of the occupation (Jeffrey and MacDonald, 2006); when research does not begin with the assumption that sex workers are the experts on their own lives, these types of nuances are missed.

The “top down” (i.e., non-participant driven) approach to sex work harm reduction research adopted by the majority of studies in Rekart’s (2005) review is congruent with the institutionalization and depoliticization of harm reduction in the field of drug use. Smith (2011) provides an extensive discussion of this phenomenon, arguing that:

... politically committed, theoretically engaged forms of social research based on true collaborative autonomy with users can actively work toward re-politicizing the future of harm reduction practice by engaging in a direct political critique of the social and legal systems that create harm (p. 216).

Indeed, a re-politicization is necessary if harm reduction research hopes to address the true sources of harm for sex workers; I would go further to state that we need not only critique the social and legal systems, but the flawed ideologies that drive them. The first step towards this re-politicization is placing sex workers and their critical analysis at the nexus of research.

Many authors of sex work research in Canada have embraced this idea that the interpretations of sex workers’ experiences should be the foundation of good sex work research (Jeffrey & MacDonald; 2006a). This research has occurred in the areas of health, violence, the effects of sex work laws and policy, work and labour, stigma, gender, and social rights and justice (Benoit & Miller, 2001; Brock, 1998; Bruckert, Parent, & Robitaille, 2003; Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006b; Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000; Lewis, Maticka-Tyndale, Shaver & Schramm, 2005; Lowman, 2001; Lowman & Atchison, 2006; O’Doherty, 2007; PIVOT, 2006; Ross, 2000; Shaver, 1994). Shaver & Benoit (2006), both leading authorities on sex work in Canada, provide a review of theoretically and

methodologically sound research on the Canadian sex trade; the results of this review are the identification of research gaps, along with recommendations for new directions for future research on sex work. They report:

... work on the social construction of stigma relating to the sex industry has begun, but we know little about how discrimination or enacted stigma become 'felt' and internalized, and what the outcome means for PWSI [people working in the sex industry] (p. 246).

In addition, they state that more work is required regarding the personal lives of sex workers, as "they often still appear as one-dimensional, rather than as people whose work represents only one part of their multi-faceted lives" (p. 246). The existence of these limited, stigmatized ideas about the identities of sex workers necessitates the prioritization of the voices and opinions of people who do sex work. Stigma imposes a fixed identity upon the sex worker, while subjectivity allows the person agency in the continual and fluid process of self-conceptualization. This denial of the ability to self-conceptualize is a form of violence; the shutting down of sex work subjectivity is at the heart of sex work stigma and creates barriers to participating on par in social and political life. This chapter offers a theoretical discussion of that process via Fraser's (2003) concept of misrecognition; harm reduction philosophies must not only extend to sex work but expand to account for misrecognition, if we wish to reduce harms for people who do sex work.

Methodology: Researching with Hard-to-Reach Populations

This work draws from interviews conducted in the capital city of St. John's and surrounding areas⁶⁹, in the province of Newfoundland, during the summer of 2013. The interviews were conducted as part of the author's PhD program in sociology; in June 2013, this project was approved by the ethics board at the University of New Brunswick. The project explored the relationships between stigma and subjectivity, as articulated by sex workers.

There are numerous challenges inherent in research involving hard-to-reach populations (Benoit, Jansson, Millar & Phillips, 2005; Shaver, 2005); since no sampling frame exists for sex work research, random sampling methods were impossible. This challenge was addressed through the use of diverse sampling methods: participants were contacted through various community partner organizations (St. John's Women's Centre, Thrive, Planned Parenthood-NL Sexual Health Centre, Street Reach, the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Safe Works Access Program, the Native Friendship Centre, the John Howard Society, Stella Burry Community Services, the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women, Athena Health/the Morgentaler clinic, etc.), as well as through work locations (street locations, escort agencies, etc.), poster advertisements (in multiple public places such as hospitals, coffee shops, bars, the local university, etc.), various online resources (i.e., online spaces

⁶⁹ The majority of interviews took place in St. John's; a small number happened in the neighbouring cities of Mount Pearl and the Goulds, and participants who did sex work and were incarcerated at the time of the interviews were interviewed at the NL Correctional Centre for Women, in Clarenville, NL, about 190km from the capital city. Although the interviews were restricted to these areas, participants living in St. John's at the time had originated from all areas of NL, some having grown up in small outport communities around the province.

where sex workers advertise their services), and snowball, or word of mouth sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Emmel, et al., 2007). The majority of sex work research involves only females who work on the street (O'Doherty, 2007); this dissertation project is unusual in that it includes men and women working in both indoor and outdoor locations of the sex industry. This dissertation is also original in that it takes place in the city of St. John's, NL, an area with a relatively small population in comparison to the large urban areas where the majority of sex work research has occurred.

Over 30 interviews were conducted, with women and men working in the industry, including with a group of women who were incarcerated at the time of the interviews. The people interviewed engaged in all forms of sex work, ranging from on street, to massage and escort agencies, dancing, independent work, and cam work (i.e., online sex shows on hosting websites). Many of the people were happy with their jobs, while some expressed the desire to change their current situations. Some of those interviewed were self-identified survivors of child sexual exploitation, had been exploited and/or trafficked as youth; others had a great deal of economic privilege and had left high paying jobs to engage in sex work. The range of experiences were vast, and as there was no sex work outreach program operating in St. John's at the time⁷⁰, the previously mentioned

⁷⁰ This situation has recently changed; following the completion of the interviews, the author was hired by the St. John's Status of Women Council to work with local sex workers in the development and implementation of a harm reduction outreach service. <http://sjwomenscentre.ca/programs/shop/> Safe Harbour Outreach Program (S.H.O.P.) was formed in October 2013. S.H.O.P. is currently working towards becoming a sex worker-led organization and is a proud member of the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform <http://sexworklawreform.com/>.

diverse sampling methods were used to access people working in as many locations as possible. The interviews were qualitative, open-ended, and participant driven; they were framed as an opportunity for sex workers to talk back to what others think and say about them and their lives, a platform to articulate their own interpretations of their worlds and subjectivities.

Theoretical Framework: Misrecognition and the Expansion of Harm Reduction Principles to Sex Work

Sex workers in Newfoundland addressed harm reduction not only in terms of access to services and decriminalization, but prioritized valuing the people who do sex work, legitimizing the work, and changing attitudes about sex work in general. This should be the major objective of harm reduction as it pertains to sex work. Many of the harms associated with sex work are either directly or indirectly caused by the devaluing and judgment of people who do sex work; stigma is a form of violence in and of itself, and misguided assumptions and beliefs also facilitate the passing of harmful laws and policies (this point will be discussed further in the section to follow on the Canadian context). There has been much effort by people who do sex work, as well as people who lobby on their behalf, to try to change legislation that has produced the unjust working and living conditions sex workers must endure (Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000; PIVOT, 2006, 2014; STAR, 2006; van der Meulen & Gillies, 2007). These groups have argued that only through the decriminalization of sex work coupled with social programming, will people who do sex work be afforded the same rights to health, safety, and citizenship afforded to other members of society. In

New Zealand, in 2003, years of lobbying government proved fruitful as the Prostitution Reform Act was passed (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2008), resulting in the decriminalization of all forms of sex work. This legislation has been called a “shift from moralist approach to prostitution to a health and human rights approach” (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2008, p. 3). This change in legislation had many positive outcomes for sex workers with regards to health, safety, and access to legal rights; however, “while the PRA responds to the harms and discrimination of previous legislation by prioritizing worker health and safety over moralistic concerns, remnants of stigma remain” (Bruckert and Hannem, 2013, p. 60). I would argue that stigma eradication did not occur in this case, and will not occur in any case, until the intersubjective conditions of misrecognition are addressed.

The term recognition “designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in that each sees the other as its equal and also as separate from it” (Fraser, 2003, p. 10). In *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth engage in a debate over how best to understand the relationship of redistribution to recognition. Honneth “conceives recognition as the fundamental, overarching moral category, while treating distribution of wealth as derivative” (2003, p. 3), while Fraser denies that distribution is subsumed under recognition, and “proposes a perspectival dualist analysis that casts the two categories as co-fundamental and mutually irreducible dimensions of justice” (2003, p. 3). Fraser’s model is the superior mode for theorizing claims to justice, especially injustices experienced by sex

trade workers, as it allows us to frame the social construction of sex work stigma as a case of misrecognition, or status subordination resulting in lack of full citizenship.

Fraser's alternative to Honneth's monolithic approach of claiming recognition as the fundamental moral category is a two-pronged approach to injustice, where virtually all real-world axes of subordination implicate both maldistribution and misrecognition, in forms where neither concept can be addressed alone due to the ways in that one is intertwined and interacts with the other, yet where each requires some independent practical attention. Here, the redistribution paradigm focuses on injustices it defines as socio-economic and presumes to be rooted in the economic structure of society; the remedy for these types of injustices is economic restructuring of some sort. This definition of redistribution is standard, however Fraser's conception of recognition is not; "Usually, recognition is taken to be a matter of self-realization" (Fraser, 2003, p. 28), that is, being recognized by another subject is linked to integrity as it is a prerequisite for attaining full subjectivity; this is the view of Axel Honneth, and it is against this view of misrecognition as impaired subjectivity and damaged self-identity that Fraser so vehemently argues⁷¹.

⁷¹ This shift from recognition as a concept linked to identity, to recognition as a concept linked to one's relationship to systematic power imbalances is the real usefulness of Fraser's conceptualization for the purposes of this work. It gets us beyond stigma as an intersubjective phenomenon, to an ability to simultaneously theorize the structural aspects of stigma in relation to social interaction. This is elaborated upon in the remainder of this article.

Fraser, uniquely, proposes to conceive recognition as a matter of justice. This means a shift in focus from self-fulfillment to social status. Misrecognition, in this view, occurs when:

Some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and that disparage their distinctive characteristics, or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them (Fraser, 2003, p. 29)

This notion addresses both the interpersonal and structural elements of sex work stigma; stigma does not just live in the interactions between individuals but is institutionalized in legislative and policy responses to sex work, impeding sex workers' ability to access their social and human rights (Jeffrey & Sullivan, 2009). It is this status subordination, and not lack of self-realization that constitutes the injustice of misrecognition. Fraser treats misrecognition as an issue of social status, which means examining the institutionalized patterns of cultural value and the ways these affect the relative standing of individuals. Thus, misrecognition and status subordination occur when institutionalized patterns of cultural value constitute some actors as less than full partners in social interaction, or in other words, when there are institutionalized relations of subordination. This necessitates a shift in focus from individuals to social institutions, and the ways in that these institutions structure interaction according to cultural norms that impede parity of participation or constitute some categories of single actors as normative and others as deficient or inferior. This is what Nancy Fraser terms the status model of recognition, and it is this model that is best suited to addressing the complex situation of sex workers both

theoretically and on a practical level of social justice and harm reduction. This version of misrecognition considers the political challenges facing those seeking emancipatory change and recognizes that ideologies that tread in the realm of morality always further marginalize sex workers by contributing to the processes that render them unequal citizens.

In short, Fraser argues that Honneth's recognition is insufficient for articulating and explaining all forms of social injustice. Indeed, his theory of recognition that is based upon a moral psychology of personal identity formation is an especially inadequate tool for dealing with the social injustices experienced by sex workers; here, what is important about Fraser's model is the treatment afforded to the concept of recognition, and the place of subjectivity within that mode of theorizing. For Fraser, the dimension of recognition concerns status equality, not intact identity, and its institutional expression is the status order as a whole, "spanning the full gamut of contemporary social institutions, a composite of the various value patterns that regulate interaction at different sites" (Fraser, 2003, p. 219). By conceiving misrecognition as status subordination, it locates the wrongs in social relations rather than in the individual or interpersonal psychology of the person making the claims to injustice. Mapped onto harm reduction, this concept necessitates that we view the harms associated with sex work as located in social relations rather than in the individual experiencing the harms. As Fraser states, "[w]hen misrecognition is identified with internal distortions in the structure of the self-consciousness of the oppressed, it is but a short step to blaming the victim" (p.31). This type of victim-blaming often occurs

with regards to the misrecognition claims made by sex workers; as the following section demonstrates, this is often an outcome of the ways that subjectivity and agency are theorized, especially in radical feminist approaches to sex work. The alternative to this, as outlined by Fraser, is the status model, where, in contrast, “misrecognition is a matter of externally manifest and publicly verifiable impediments to some people’s standing as full members of society” (p. 31). As discussed in the following section, the radical feminist/moralistic approach to sex work contributes to the harms sex workers experience in terms of participatory parity and injustice; the fact that sex workers cannot be equal members of society is actually central to this line of thinking, that forces people into the status of victim.

Fraser states that only when all actors are constituted as “peers, capable of participating on a par with one another in social life then we can speak of reciprocal recognition and status equality” (2003, p. 29). Gaining recognition for sex workers is a fitting goal for harm reduction as it pertains to sex work; this not only extends but expands the principles of harm reduction when mapped from drug use to sex work.

Results: (Mis)recognition, Ideology, and Harm

Once transcribed and reviewed, the interview transcripts were analyzed using a form of analysis that prioritizes the voice of the interviewees (Miller, 2000). The fundamental premise of Miller’s discourse analysis is “that language constitutes rather than reflects reality, and that speakers use talk strategically to accomplish their purposes in particular settings” (p. 317). Just as the process of meaning

making that occurs in the ideological circle legitimizes one version of reality, in their talk people promote one version of the world and disqualify another; thus, in this methodology language is analyzed as a “claims-making” enterprise, and these claims are stories or accounts designed to further some practical goal. Hence, there is a shift away from analyzing interpretations for their truth-value, and rather the consequences of the inquirer’s interpretation are emphasized. In sex work research, this would involve attending not only to what people who do sex work say, but how their talk is used to construct alternative interpretations of their situations and subjectivities that are highly political in that they resist dominant discourse and stigmas/stereotypes. In this account, the agency of the speaker is paramount; thus, we must attend to the work that language does, and to the contextual specificities of the work carried out by alternative accounts or stories. Miller’s methodology revolves around “talk’s performative aspect—that is, its ‘usefulness’ for members, its character as action rather than as, say, ‘communication’” (p. 324). The context in which talk occurs is imperative to the analysis, as attention to the use of language within the context in which it is spoken allows for the explication of the moral and political claims made in “everyday talk.”

This idea that actors “do things with their talk” (Miller, 2000, p. 325) that are both strategic and political is found in the way the account is crafted to respond to the demands of the setting, to contest the settled order of things. As Miller (2000) states, the strength of her methodological approach “lies in the way it vividly demonstrates—rather than simply asserts—the poverty of a truth-seeking model

of analysis. It shows that how we construct the world in language counts” (p. 332). This point is immensely important for sex work research, as part of the usefulness of Miller’s approach is in its ability to refute the models of analysis that have sought victimization as truth for all sex workers, and to attend to the intersubjective conditions of misrecognition outlined in the theoretical discussion.

Misrecognition, Radical Feminism, and Sex Work

Throughout recent history, radical feminists (specifically SWERFS, or sex worker exclusionary radical feminists) and other activists including academics have “engaged in heated theoretical disputes over the implications of prostitution or sex work for women’s subordination or empowerment” (Bernstein, 2002). The dominant side of this debate, that is, the view most often taken up by law makers, out-reach workers, the media, and the public is that of sex worker as victim (Brock, 1998). In this view, prostitution is cited as the “absolute embodiment of patriarchal male privilege” (Scoular, 2004, p. 343), and male domination is exercised through sexuality. In this theorizing, the selling of sex is morally undesirable as it is an example of male dominance over women. To say that all forms of sex work are examples of violence against women because buying sex is a form of male power actually presupposes that women are sexual objects to be bought and sold. To proceed with this logic, womanhood is affirmed through sexual activity, effectively reducing women’s identity to a single trait, sexual activity. This sexual activity is then judged as good or bad according to whether it is “paid sex or loving sex” (Scoular, 2004, p. 345), the latter as the

only type of acceptable sexual interaction. Thus “the prostitute” is constructed as ‘other’ through contradictory images of desire and disgust within the processes of defining acceptable notions of acceptable female sexuality (Hubbard, 1998). Not only does this “confirm current normative understandings of ‘genuine’ sex as in some way outside power” (Scoular, 2004, p. 346), it also allows for distinctions to be made between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ people based on their sexual activity. This ascribes a value to sex that is then used to argue against its commodification. The results of this are the devaluing of sex workers, and the pervasive “whore stigma.”

One female sex worker from NL discussed the fact that there is no “type of person” who does sex work, contrary to what moralistic accounts of sex work imply:

They don't know who's out there doing it. I didn't know myself, before I got into it. I took psychology at MUN [Memorial University of Newfoundland] and I'm at it. Could be your next door neighbour. You don't know, could be anybody. I'm after going through almost my whole program, I'm almost done and no one knows. And I can guarantee you, someone who lives on either side of you has either paid for it, or done it themselves. People are just ignorant to it—they think it's a certain type of person but it's not. That's how I paid off most of my student loan. (Sarah)

Another woman who participated in the research in NL made similar comments:

I'd want people to stop looking at me like I'm a bad person, 'cuz I'm not. And I don't want people to judge me for what I do... [sighs] it's... I don't know, I'm just not a bad person. I'm doing something that's getting me ahead in life and people shouldn't judge until they understand. People don't understand at all. (Rochelle)

Well they just don't take the time to. (Author)

No, they don't, they just look at you and judge, 'oh what a dirty whore, this and that' and it's not right. (Rochelle)

And it's definitely not true. (Author)

[smiles] A job is a job. And even women who have families, when they go with their men [clients], they don't think of them in a passionate way, it's just a job. (Rochelle)

There are further problems with this moralistic line of thinking, as viewing sex work as always exploitative denies the existence of consensual sex work and defines all sex workers as passive, helpless, degraded victims. Herein, we see the process of Fraser's (2003) misrecognition at work, as sex workers are denied their agency. Many sex workers from NL spoke back to the victimization discourse:

I actually really enjoy what I do, I do like it, I'm not—I've never been forced into it, thank god, or like it's not a last-ditch effort, I could have done other things, something else would have come along eventually, ummm.... I must say, I mean most of the guys are married and most of them will probably stay married, because they're getting something that they don't get at home. [laughs] It's sad to say it but, that's it—I don't know that people are meant to be monogamous anyways... so. (Kim)

Any form of agency or empowerment for sex workers, in the flawed victimization ideology, must be accessed through the use of identity politics. This is problematic not only because identity politics fails to address the systems of power that produce the subordination of sex workers, but also because sex workers must always identify as victims in order to gain agency. Sex workers who claim not to be victims are silenced; they are assumed to be in denial. Lerum (1999) was assured by a radical feminist who supported such theorizing that “they’re [sex workers] not going to admit they’re victims” (p. 9). Here, a

limited subjectivity based on victimization means that sex workers cannot gain agency for themselves, but rather must be rescued by others who “give them a voice” and claim agency for them.

Two women who worked together and were interviewed together, discussed some of the stereotypes associated with the victimization discourse, and expressed the desire to have their voices heard:

*Yeah, well we come from good homes too, right? We didn't—people think a lot of girls that are out there, it's the end result of a broken home, probably their mother did the same thing, they're following in someone's footsteps, you been abused, you been raped, you been molested as a child—I've never had anything like that happen to me, I never ever been in a situation, you know when I was younger, where I felt like no one would love me, or you know what I mean, or scared of what tomorrow would bring, there was no violence in my home, no drug abuse, no alcohol abuse, there was very little swearing, my dad was a school teacher for 33 years, my mom worked at the phone company. I'm adopted, she's adopted, we both came from the same kind of home, it was a very structured lifestyle—could you say the same thing? **(Tara)***

*Oh yeah, totally. People usually think working girls are always troubled children, the reason why they're doing this is because they never had a dad—I'm after hearing that a lot, even before I got involved in this, so, [they say] she's only looking for attention from men that she didn't receive because her father walked out when she was young, whatever... **(Amy)***

*How does it make you feel when you hear people sayin' stuff like that? **(Author)***

*It makes me want to educate them, it makes me want to tell them my life—who I was and where I came from so that they'd be better educated, and have a better understanding of it, then they could tell someone else, someone else and someone else and before you know it, the whole world got a better understanding of it and wouldn't be so shy to talk about it. **(Tara)***

*“Have a real conversation?” **(Author)***

“Yeah! Exactly!” (Tara)

Not to overstate, but any form of agency associated with the victimization discourse is actually a reinforcement of a subordinated position; recognition is not increased in this process. Real conversations between equals—what was desired by the woman above—can never be had under these conditions.

Further, from a human rights standpoint, the debate over whether sex work is victimizing, or empowering is absolutely erroneous and irrelevant; the fact of the matter is that sex workers deserve human rights, dignity and respect whatever their relationship to the work. As one sex worker from NL put it,

As soon as people hear the word sex trade or prostitute or hooker, first image that pops into their mind is probably gonna be needles and liquor bottles and you know, the condoms and shit like this. There are people out there who are just in hard times who need to make some quick money. That's it, right? And where society has—well can't say everybody—but where it's painted that way, then some people think they can treat the people in this industry any way they want. Say whatever they want, do whatever they want, and it's just... everybody deserves respect, no matter what they do. I don't care if you sell yourself or if you are the president of some big company or if you scrub toilets for a living—everybody deserves respect...
(Charlotte)

Sex workers in NL spoke to what it meant for them to know that some people view sex work as morally wrong. Overwhelmingly, the results were that they didn't tell people in their lives about their work and felt that they were hiding parts of themselves. The resulting harms of this are twofold: firstly, not having a safety or support person because sex work is hidden increases the risk of harms while working; secondly, hiding one's “true self,” as articulated by many sex workers in the study, is psychologically harmful, a huge source of stress, and fosters a state of ill-being.

Traditional theory around stigma (Goffman, 1963) implies that sex workers would hide that which is stigmatizing (their work) in order to “save face” or protect themselves by managing their “spoiled identity.” Interestingly, one man spoke to the fact that he actually hides the work to protect others. I asked:

So, I just want to understand, even though you said the stigma is not affecting your everyday life, it is with your mom; so you're taking these measures so that your family won't find out—to protect yourself? Would you say? (Author)

I wouldn't say to protect myself, I would say to protect my mom. She would just be heartbroken because she's the one of those people... people don't understand that if you're good at something you wanna get paid for it, like if you really knew how to teach kids or get along with kids you become a teacher. (Mark)

Right, and one thing is valued more than another—even though they're both services, both making the world go around... that devaluing I got a real problem with. Lots of people have sex. What do you care if someone is getting paid... (Author)

Exactly. I mean, she doesn't even agree with—I think she saw Fifty Shades of Gray on my coffee table and she flipped the hell out. I'm like really mom? I'm not even going to get into that with mom. (Mark)

Another man talked about the fact that he does tell people, and attempts to educate, but is then often burdened with unwanted pity and a lack of understanding:

There are some people that I think I've helped with discussing it, and I have other people who take pity on me and say, you know, you're a good looking guy, you don't need to do this, things like that... but I mean, I just explain again why I choose to do it and how it works for me. Right? So no, there are—don't get me wrong, I mean all your friends can't be accepting and understanding, you know? I have people who, they don't judge me and get mad at me for it or think that I'm slime or dirt or anything like that, they look at it as, you know, you could have better, or you could be doing better, you could be doing this, you could be doing that. (Simon)

One woman joked that her aunts would all pray for her if they knew, but then discussed, on a more serious note, the fact that she never felt wrong or badly about the work, only about people's reaction to it.

I haven't told tons of people... As far as I tell people, I'm doing some massage here and there and that's all anybody needs to know. Less is more for that! I don't need people to be stressing out about me—I mean [people would say] 'My god why is she doing this?'—that's really when you feel like 'What did I do wrong?' It's like I'm just that person—there's something for everybody! (Kim)

She went on to discuss the fact that she knew the people in her life would not understand, so she hid her work from the majority of them. She also stated that sex work was a central part of who she was, and that by hiding it she was masking an integral part of her identity. Another man also focused on the identity piece; he spoke extensively about hiding both the work and his sexual identity as a gay man, and the burden of leading a double life.

I'd be very a volatile person when I wasn't working, or if I wasn't out screwing around. (Francis)

Why do you think that was? (Author)

Cuz I had to wear a mask... I was not flamboyant, but this, ah, sexual being. Ahhhh I'd go with just about, not just about anyone, but, if they fit criteria that I was comfortable with, Ok? So then, I'm say 'Prince Francis' [when working] and then when I wasn't doing that, I'd put on my mask, put on my leather jacket and my boot knife and my leather gloves and I was Francis. I was ready to rock and roll at the drop of a dime. I'd rob your car, I'd burn your fuckin' house down, I'd do whatever was necessary to get what I wanted, by any means, and if that meant breaking a window out and stealing a stereo out of your car, I would go and do it. And there was no need for me to do it, because I was looked after at home, like I was never hungry, I always had clean clothes and everything, but what I did, that was... I did those things because I didn't want everyone else to know, that I was 'Prince Francis' (Francis)

He also spoke to what it meant for his personal relationships, to be able to be open about himself and his work:

What's the most important thing in your life? (Author)

Most important thing in my life... umm, most important thing in my life is... [long pause]... the most important thing in my life would be somebody to feel the same way about me as I do about them. (Francis)

I think we all want that. (Author)

That would be the most important thing for me. For someone to be completely honest, with the way I am, to them. And no in betweens. (Francis)

You deserve that. (Author)

Yup. I do. Yeah man. Because when I am completely honest towards a particular person, I give them everything, and there's no in-between. It's all about them, and I can't tell lies to the person. I got to fuckin' tell them the truth. And when I do that, you got everything, man. You got me. And there's nothin' else to hide. (Francis)

Lastly, another man raised the point that acceptance would generally make society a better place.

Well I just hope that someday that the whole outlook on the industry, you know, becomes a little bit brighter; that people will be able to stop being so subjective on how they perceive something, and someone. Like I said, you know, when life is simple, life is better. If people stop over thinking, stop thinking worst case scenario, and just relax and learn to enjoy life with whoever that is, and however that is... I dunno, I think it would just be a better place for everybody. (Joshua)

The point about acceptance raised above is the exact opposite of what has played out recently in the context of debates around sex work laws in Canada; “worst case scenario” was the theme of the discussions around sex work, and consensual adult sex work was constantly inflated with victimization and human trafficking. The following section briefly outlines the current Canadian legal

context, followed by a discussion of the injustices and misrecognition that were inherent in the process of turning the Conservative government's Bill C-36 into the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*.

Current Canadian Context: Ideological Harms

The idea that people who use drugs should be the central driving force behind the harm reduction movement (Smith, 2014) or the tenet "Nothing about us without us" (Jürgens, 2008) is central to the philosophies and practices of harm reduction; when it comes to sex work, harm reduction needs to become furthered politically, and take on the fight over the politics of sex work that is currently plaguing the Canadian sex work landscape in terms of laws, social funding, and most importantly, social discourse. When the discourses on sex work policies are determined by those who are not sex workers, then the interests of groups other than sex workers are reflected in the laws, and these laws then contribute to the further marginalization, exploitation, and abuse of sex workers.

Such is the case in Canada, where the "Nordic model," or the criminalization of clients forms the current legal landscape around sex work (Government of Canada, 2014)⁷². The previous laws criminalized sex workers themselves and

⁷² At the time of writing no academic research has yet been published on the senate meetings pertaining to Bill C-36 the evidence for the statements made in this section is drawn from watching the original senate meetings as they aired, as well as a reading of the transcripts, found at:
http://www.parl.gc.ca/sencommitteebusiness/CommitteeTranscripts.aspx?parl=37&ses=1&Language=E&comm_id=1090 A list of the expert witnesses involved can be

were found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada (PIVOT, 2014). It has been argued by many sex workers and their allies that the Conservative government's solution - Bill C-36, that eventually formed law as the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (PCEPA) is equally as unconstitutional, further violates the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and is, in effect, actually more harmful than the legal situation that existed previously in Canada (Pivot Legal Society and Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence, 2014; Stunt, 2014). A widely cited study on the criminalization and policing of clients in Vancouver, Canada, found that PCEPA reproduces the same risks for violence, abuse, and poor health for sex workers as the previous laws in Canada (Krusi et. al, 2014). The results showed that the criminalization of clients had a limited effect on the deterrence of sex work (the Conservative government's main argument for enacting such laws), severely restricted sex workers' safety strategies, displaced street-based work to isolated areas, and prevented access to police protection (Krusi et. al, 2014). Krusi et al. conclude that:

The results also highlight the critical role of sex workers' lived experiences in any evidence-based policy making in Canada and globally. Two decades of failures of prostitution laws in Canada stemmed from failure of consecutive governments to listen to strong evidence by sex workers, academics and human rights experts that the laws were creating and exacerbating devastating harms to sex workers' safety, health and human rights, including violence, abuse and murder. (2014, p. 9)

found here: http://www.parl.gc.ca/sencommitteebusiness/CommitteeWitness.aspx?parl=37&ses=1&Language=E&comm_id=1090.

Herein, we see the negative effects of silencing the voices of sex workers in the development and enactment of legislation that impacts their work and lives. For decades sex worker organizations have been highlighting the harms that criminalization and stigmatization create in the lives and working conditions of sex workers and have been arguing for decriminalization as the best solution (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005; Cantin, 2006; Comte, 2013; Delacoste & Alexander, 1998; Jenness, 1993). In the spirit of “nothing about us without us”, I would argue that communities of sex workers know best as to what legislative changes they need to stay safe on the job. One female sex worker from NL spoke about how safety measures including hiring a driver—illegal at the time of the interviews—made her working environment safer:

Clientele, they're almost more respectful when they know you got someone watchin' out for ya. You know, if you haven't called by a certain time, they know they're gonna come, cuz you got a driver, he drops you off by a certain time, knows where you're to, right? If you're in a hotel, you tell him what room and stuff like that and there is guys out there that are watchin' out for the girls and stuff like that.

(Amanda)

Right. When you say they're more respectful, what do that mean?

(Author)

*I don't know, just um, it's almost like they have more respect for you as a person, they treat you more like a human being, whereas when you're down on the street [without security], it's like you're just like a dirty whore and get in the car and do it, or whatever. You know? Just their attitude towards you is different, I guess. **(Amanda)***

Another female sex worker spoke about how much safer it was to work inside, another practice criminalized in Canada at the time:

*You know, being inside and having it more secure and safe, it's a benefit. It really is. **(Ashley)***

Oh, for sure, I totally agree. (Author)

It's same as working at a convenience store. The security cameras and that, you can't come in with your hoods up, right? And there's all these safety measures. (Ashley)

During the process of turning Bill C-36 into law, the motto of the Canadian government could have been “everything about them, without them,” as the sex workers who participated in the legal process were constantly challenged and told that they were not experts on their own lives. The rhetoric put forward by the conservative government was that sex work is always a form of violence against women, and that all sex workers are either criminals to be eradicated from society or victims who must be saved. This point is inherent in the wording of the bill that informed PCEPA; “Bill C-36 reflects... treatment of prostitution as a form of sexual exploitation that disproportionately and negatively impacts on women and girls” (Department of Justice, 2014a). Its first stated objective is to “Protect those who sell their own sexual services” (Department of Justice, 2014b). The idea that all sex workers are victims is at odds with what people who do sex work in Newfoundland had to say about their own experiences. For many men and women, they were adamant that this is their job:

I was a dominatrix. The funny thing they said about me was that I did morticians, politicians, physicians, and musicians [laughs]. (Shirley)

[laughs] All the “icians”! (Author)

[laughs] But they were wrong about the musician, never did a musician. (Shirley)

No? (Author)

No, they were always strung out. But, I did that for a while. I was protected, you know, I wasn't like beat up and you know, made to do

this, made to do that, it was just... it was just a job. (Shirley)

Yeah? (Author)

Yeah, just a job, you know? (Shirley)

Another person joked:

*And a lot of us will say I'm goin' to work, I'll talk to ya later.
(Charlotte)*

So, it's work for ya? A job? (Author)

*Oh definitely! Just like everybody else's job... just probably a little bit
more naked [laughs] (Charlotte)*

One man thought that it was odd to be asked how he referred to his
experiences:

*So do you have a name for what you do? Or is there something
specific you call it? (Author)*

*Um, no! Not really, there's never really been a name—I haven't really
thought about naming it. You...I just—it's just one of those things that
I do. When the time is there, right? That's a strange question actually!
(Joshua)*

*For sure, lots of people don't have an answer to that! I suppose
they're not sort of chatting with people and telling them, hey, I'm
doing this! (Author)*

Exactly, that's...well I would say that it's my part time job! (Joshua)

Another woman answered the same question as follows:

*Everyone calls it escorts, call girls, hookers, whatever, "prostitutes",
right? But the way I look at it, I'm just providing a service, just like the
missus behind the counter at Sobey's [grocery store] is providing a
service. Ya know? (Lauren)*

Exactly. (Author)

*Exactly. I wouldn't put a name on it per say, because with putting
names on things comes that stereotype, that judgement. You know?*

If you choose the wrong name, you'll get negative judgement, negative effects. (Lauren)

Many of the people interviewed expressed the desire for society to view their occupation as a “legitimate” form of work—the exact opposite approach of the Conservative government who, as cited above, name all sex work as a form of exploitation and violence:

Like, in my head yes, it is, it should be legalized, and I believe it should because it will keep the girls safe. (Ashley)

I agree (Author)

And it will keep the clients safe as well! (Ashley)

Exactly (Author)

But, no like, [sighs] there's such a judgement on being a call girl or street worker, um, as where when I'm working at [convenience store], everyone's like all friendly and happy go lucky, but if they knew [laughs], about what I'm doin' on the side, [laughs] they'd be like.... right, like, hidden away, run away from her type thing! But [I think] instead of having negative images on it, turn that image of that lonely face of the street worker or the call girl, turn that into something positive, because it will better the future for them... It would keep girls safer, it would keep clients safer, like, cuz when it's a legal business when it's being run by the government, you have rules and regulations you have to follow by; you know? So there's none of this worry about a client beating the crap outta ya, or a client freaking out because he has to wear a condom. You don't wanna wear a condom? Get the Fuck! Ya know? (Ashley)

When, during the parliamentary hearings on Bill C-36, sex workers spoke truth to power, stating that sex work is in fact their job, and that many adults in this country consent to work in the sex industry, they were belittled, disrespected, and in effect, told that they could not be knowers of their own lives or realities. This is misrecognition (Fraser, 2003) in action; based on their responses to sex worker testimony, it was assumed by those on side with the Conservative

government that the expert witnesses called forward could not participate on par in the legal process simply because they were sex workers. In a submission to the Senate Committee Hearings on Bill C-36, entitled “A Clear Pattern of Exclusionary Practices: Sex Worker Voices Silenced,” the British Columbia Coalition of Experiential Communities (2014) summed up the situation in that Bill C-36 was founded on personal moralistic and ideological beliefs (i.e., the promotion of a personal goal of abolition of prostitution, that has no place in a parliamentary process) and that the research and information provided to support this view was biased, and potentially unethical. The report outlines the exclusion of sex worker voices, as well as the silencing and belittling of the accounts that were provided by the few sex workers and allies allowed to participate. Indeed, the Parliamentary Justice Committee hearings were indicative of the Conservative government’s longstanding exclusionary attitudes toward sex workers:

At the hearings, sex workers testifying were mocked, belittled, laughed at, and their testimony was not taken seriously. Members of the audience heckled them while the Conservative Committee Chair did nothing to stop that behaviour to ensure sex workers voices were fairly included or to ensure they felt safe giving their testimony (BC Coalition of Experiential Communities, 2014). Generally, Conservative committee members asked no questions of those who opposed the Bill—clearly demonstrating they had no interest in including all relevant perspectives and evidence on the issue. In one extremely inappropriate comment Conservative MP Stella Ambler went so far as to tell a witness her experiences sounded like a ‘surreal sitcom.’ An insult to that sex worker witness and to all the work sex workers have collectively done in our fight for our lives. In another example, MP Joy Smith questioned Jean McDonald, Executive Director of Maggie’s, a Toronto sex worker organization with 25 years of service to sex workers, on whether she was paid for her work. When she was challenged on the relevance of her question, she refused to answer. (2014, p. 8)

The examples cited above are exemplary of how sex workers were treated throughout the entire process; adherents to the victimization model imposed their flawed opinions and views onto the lived realities and interpretations of the true experts, sex workers themselves, by belittling them, as outlined above, and prioritizing their own interpretations over the voices of lived experience. This is the ultimate source of violence and harm facing Canadian sex workers as a group, and it is the starting point for all other individual harms that come about because of the unconstitutional laws that resulted from this deeply undemocratic process. This is also, as was stated, exemplary of misrecognition in action, and a clear demonstration of how Fraser's theorizing is related to ideology.

Misrecognition and status subordination occur when institutionalized patterns of cultural value constitute some actors as less than full partners in social interaction, as was seen in the example cited above where the devaluing of sex workers and their voices meant that they were not allowed to participate on par in the court and policy processes. The moralistic and ideological beliefs that informed those doing the misrecognition in that situation then contributed to the passing of dangerous laws, which further the relations of status subordination via the institution of the law. The ideology informed the practice of misrecognition, which further entrenched the unequal relationships of power at an institutional and structural level.

Conclusion: Recognition as Harm Reduction

Stepping Stone, a harm reduction-based sex worker support program in Halifax, Nova Scotia, states as its primary purpose "to contribute to the health and safety

of sex workers through supportive programs and community education, and *to encourage the public to see sex workers as people first.*" (MacDonald et al., 2013, p. 168, emphasis mine). This idea of changing public opinion, what is essentially the work of stigma reduction, is not peripheral but central to the concept of reducing harms for people who do sex work. Programming and practices that implement traditional harm reduction techniques with individual sex workers are useful endeavours when it comes to improving the lives of individuals; however, as a collective, sex workers need and want recognition, to be viewed as and gain the rights of full citizens. Here, we shift to view the fight for and move towards the intersubjective conditions of misrecognition as harm reduction for sex workers. Reducing harm on a large scale is a matter of human rights, a matter of justice, and a matter of structural and institutional change. Working to change the flawed and moralistic ideologies that shape sex work stigma, sex work discourse and, in the case of Canada, sex work legislation and policies, should be the ultimate goal of harm reduction for sex workers. In order for this to happen, sex worker voices must be listened to and prioritized; there is no other way for those of us who wish to reduce harm and create positive impact for people whose human rights and very humanity are currently denied by the legal, political, and social circumstances surrounding sex work in Canada. This is what sex workers say will most improve their lives: to be valued as equal members of society, to participate equally in social and political life, and to be viewed as the complex and multifaceted people that they are. These

are the conditions of mutual recognition, and they are the very least of what society owes its members who do sex work.

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Preface: ~Publication Three

Building on the themes in the past two publications, ~Publication Three shows sex workers talking back to another structure, the law, with a focus on the “felt moments” of criminalization and stigmatization. Using Thrift’s (2008) Non-Representational Theory (NRT), an unconventional “geography of what happens”, we are able to understand stigma/misrecognition, in a way that acknowledges the agency inherent in resistance, rather than simply in the agency associated with Goffman’s stigma management. This understanding is possible due to NRT’s emphases on the interaction between affect/sensation and practices as they enter the realm of the politics of everyday life. In bringing attention to the unconventional agency found in momentary interactions, NRT demonstrates its relationship to the other forms of agentive resistance highlighted throughout this dissertation.

An earlier version of this piece was submitted for publication to the Canadian Journal of Women and the Law; thus, the references are presented in Legal Style rather than APA Style in this publication, with references in footnotes throughout the text rather than in a bibliography at the end of the piece. This work is not currently published. This work is co-authored with Dr. Gayle MacDonald, who undertook 25% of the work on the manuscript with Laura Winters responsible for 75% of the content. The anecdote presented at the beginning of the chapter came from Jeffrey and MacDonald’s (2006) work.

~Publication Three, We're Not Scoffin' at Goffman, But...: New Directions for Theorizing Stigma, Law, and Resistance

Laura Winters & Gayle MacDonald

Introduction

In the following chapter we begin to explore the relationship between stigma and law, with a focus on the ways in which sex workers “feel” criminalized or perceive the weight of the interaction between law and stigma in momentary interactions. We then review whether traditional conceptualizations of stigma theory can account for these felt moments, and end with a theory of affect and sensation that is well suited to explaining this phenomenon. All of this is unpacked in relationship to our opening anecdote, directly to follow, which grounds us in the momentary and affect-laden nature of stigma, as discerned by one woman in her lived experience of subjectification to “the gaze”, and the way in which it made her feel “othered”.

A woman, a former sex worker, was shopping in the grocery store a number of years after she had left the trade. While examining produce, she looked up and caught the leering gaze of another shopper. Something about his gaze made her think ‘is he a former client?’ She couldn’t remember but was immediately uncomfortable as he continued to stare at her, expectantly. She told him she was no longer working and walked away. This incident occurred years after leaving the trade, yet she was still burdened by the stigma attached to her former occupation; she felt it in that look.

The telling of this anecdote is the genesis of this work, as it begs the question “are existing theories of stigma useful in explaining this interaction?”; that is to say, how can we use theory of stigma or use a process explanation of stigma in

such a way as to account for “the look/gaze” from this man to this woman? This “look” is key to our argument, as it makes the woman, the object of the “look”, uncomfortable, feeling different than she did before this encounter. What explains this perception? How is it that this woman “feels different” because of a look? It is clearly a perception of difference, as little externally has changed for the woman except the “feeling”. However, this perceived difference, arguably, is the stigma that occurs if one is a sex worker. Stigma, or the experience of “difference” has been theoretically explained in sociology. It has also served as a leitmotif for the surveillance/disciplinary techniques⁷³ and practices of a wide variety of social actors. In this chapter, we use it to analyze perceptions of the sex worker, her clients, and the social control agents tasked to observing and noting transgressions of law.

The role of stigma and the sex worker is especially pertinent to perceptions around difference; such differences for sex workers have legal consequences. As such, the role stigma plays in the lives of sex workers can also be a key argument for the decriminalization of sex work⁷⁴. The stigma of criminalization is a double-barreled status, as the role of ‘sex worker’ garners its own unique stigma, seemingly compounded by the weight of criminal law. For stigma to be an influential factor in law reform, and for that reform to include decriminalization

⁷³Cf *Surveillance and Society*, a journal devoted to understanding and applying Foucauldian concepts on surveillance to spatial understandings of social control and to ideas as diverse as terrorism, power, the postmodern and the postcolonial social-legal subject. Rarely, however, are such studies devoted to issues of gender.

⁷⁴ Leslie Ann Jeffrey, and Gayle Michelle MacDonald, *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

is not a new idea; indeed the Fraser Commission discussed it in 1985⁷⁵. Stigma analysis has been used in research with people experiencing addiction⁷⁶ as well as in research on other marginalized groups⁷⁷ who have socio-legal implications, such as individuals experiencing homelessness.⁷⁸

Readers may notice that in the preceding sentence we have named situations or circumstances, ‘people experiencing homelessness’, rather than labelling people as *homeless*; this is in line with the lessons of labelling theory, which explains how the terms used to describe or classify people can have impacts, especially on their behaviour and self-identity. Social groups make rules whose infraction creates deviance and those rules get applied to particular people, who are then labelled as deviant outsiders. Thus, deviance is not inherent in an act, but rather is about norm infractions or transgressions of standard cultural norms. These norms are imposed by the majority onto the minority who then become labelled deviant. The labelling approach has both helped and hindered the discourse around stigma, as a discussion of the ‘types’ of stigma and how it is

⁷⁵ Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution. *Pornography and Prostitution in Canada: Report of the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution*. Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Supply and Services Canada: Canadian Govt. Pub. Centre, Supply and Services Canada [distributor], 1985. Known hereinafter as “The Fraser Commission”. This report was released in April 1985 and recommended extensive revision of the law.

⁷⁶ Daniel Buchman and Peter B. Reiner, “Stigma and Addiction: Being and Becoming” (2009) 9 *American Journal of Bioethics* 18; Robin Room, “Stigma, Social Inequality and Alcohol and Drug Use” (2005) 24 *Drug and Alcohol Review* 143.

⁷⁷ Helen-Maria Lekas, Karolynn Siegel and Eric Schrimshaw, “Continuities and Discontinuities in the Experiences of Felt and Enacted Stigma Among Women with HIV/AIDS” (2006) 16 *Qualitative Health Research* 1165.

⁷⁸ Carol Corinne McNaughton and Teela Sanders, “Housing and Transitional Phases out of ‘disordered’ lives: the case of leaving homelessness and street sex work” (2007) 22 *Housing Studies* 885.

manifest is useful to this analysis,⁷⁹ but is also limiting, as it cannot conceptualize clearly what “the gaze”⁸⁰ does for women in the example provided initially. Labelling theory, normally thought of as interpersonal rather than structural theory, externalizes stigma, as it references the process by which a person is deemed marginal by normative roles/functions, whereas the example provided begins to get at the effects of such a process.

In this work, we hope to show how a re-examination of theorizing on stigma can help us with the nature of the problem as explained in the foregoing. We do not know what the man who was the initiator of the gaze was thinking, we only have the former sex worker’s side of the story. But as social interactions are described in this way by the person in the interaction, we can infer by her level of discomfort that “sex worker” was the designation.

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the “whore stigma”⁸¹ is at the core of most stigma against sex workers and, in relation to our anecdote, of the power imbalance in this exchange. The “whore stigma” is not new. Women have been alternatively blamed or sanctified for their sexual behaviour (or the

⁷⁹ Gregory Herek, “Aids and Stigma” (1999) 42 *American Behavioral Scientist* 1106.

⁸⁰ Lacan first popularized the concept of the ‘gaze’ as a self-reflective aspect of a social interaction, or rather, both as inducing a gaze and an awareness of being gazed at, simultaneously, which inherently produces anxiety in the person who performs the gaze. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1981). This is not the sense in which we use it here. It is closer, in this rendition to a more common usage, but differs in that the object of the gaze is a woman. This objectification by a gaze has been the study of much feminist thought. Further, the objectification implied translates well into critical work on film and on how film and law do not differ as radically as we might think. cf Orit Kamir, *Framed: Women in Law and Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Katherine Biber, “Framed: Women in Law and Film” (2007) 22 *Australian Feminist Studies* 413.

⁸¹ Gail Pheterson, *The Prostitution Prism* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); Jill Nagle, *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

lack thereof) as long as sexual behaviour has been recognized as part of social experience of women; what we hope to demonstrate is how this works in the everyday experience of women as sex workers. What would a theory of this “look” reveal? How would traditional theory of stigma explain what happened in the grocery store? Would a more rigorous theory of stigma aid the process of socio-legal discussion, both in explaining the victimology trope around the sex worker and in her eventual resistance to the label? Would a revised or reworked theory give life to the experiences of those criminalized by law, so that stigma experienced by women could be validly observed?

To address these questions, it is necessary to first outline the relevance of stigma with a specific focus on stigma and sex work, and by extension, the resulting relationship between stigmatization and the criminal law. We then question whether or not traditional sociological theories of stigma are able to fully address the interaction between stigmatization and criminal law. We do so by tracing the historical conceptualization of stigma in sociological writing. In the third and final section, we offer new directions for theorizing on stigma, as we attempt to develop a theory which is able to address both the *process* of how stigma operates in individual moments (i.e. moments such as the one illustrated in the opening anecdote), that moves it past the current theoretical understanding of stigma, as fixed and stable. In so doing, we hope to open new avenues of understanding stigma using a socio-legal analysis.

It Is Just Not Just: Stigma and Criminal Law

In the interviews conducted for the current research, many individuals spoke about feeling different from other members of society and cited the law as a major point of difference; thus, for many people interviewed, the illegality of aspects of their work meant that they felt criminalized, marginalized and othered. For example, one young woman drew a distinction between what she called “legitimate” and “illegitimate” work, with legality being the distinction between the two.

*Like, same thing as you earning your degree, once you get a career in that, that's the normal job. It's not illegal, it's not criminal...that's what separates it...because [if the law changed] I wouldn't feel like I'm having to sneak around, or, you know, be shady about what I'm doing...but no, like, *sighs* there's such a judgement on being a call girl or street worker. (3)*

Herein, the criminal nature of sex work was used by the woman as an exemplar of othering, the root of the perceived difference between herself and those of us with “legitimate” jobs and lives. Indeed, the process of stigmatizing for women involved in the legal system can occur at many points in legal process; by the actions of law makers, police officers, probation/parole officers or by correctional staff. In other words, by any who encounter women whose behaviour might be considered ‘outside’ the norms of socially proscribed behaviour.⁸² Nowhere is this truer than with the example of the sex worker. The sex worker sits ‘outside’ of the normative boundaries of what is considered ‘proper’ sexual behaviour, she literally and figuratively transgresses the boundaries, perceptually at least.

⁸² Karlene Faith, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement & Resistance* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011)

For the observer, the sex worker is (pick the category) morally deviant, a law breaker, a victim to be pitied or worse, an agent to be feared. Fear comes from the perception that the sex worker has the 'power' to, alternatively, unduly influence the young and 'innocent', break up the family, challenge social mores or transgress the 'safety' of sexual norms. Simply put, the status of the sex worker then becomes a question of power, of ability and of agency. Missing from this understanding, however, is the power such observations evoke, create and continue to manage in the life of the sex worker. Rarely is her work seen as resistant, as bold, as celebratory (of sex) or as a 'choice'. If choice enters the argument at all, it is a 'bad' one, or it is posited as a 'no choice' situation. Either way, the agency of the sex worker is questioned, first in terms of her ability to make a good decision,⁸³ secondly, in her ability to make any decision.

Feminist thought has not evaded law, in fact, feminist jurisprudential thinking has been highly influential in the development of remedy, in analysis of case law and in the deconstruction of masculinist assumptions *in toto*.⁸⁴ For any or all of these reasons, feminist jurisprudence has been a necessary project in the development of thinking on women and law.⁸⁵ However, not all women, even

⁸³ Antony Duff tackles the idea of "choice" in matters of 'vice or virtue' although popular, as misplaced in any understanding of the role of criminal law. Antony Duff, "Virtue, Vice and Criminal Liability: Do we want an Aristotelian Criminal Law?" (2002) 6 Buffalo Law Review 147.

⁸⁴ Mary-Jane Mossman "Feminism and Legal Method - The Difference it Makes" (1986) 3 Australian Journal of Law and Society 30, was arguably the first legal scholar in Canada to look at a feminist *method* for analyzing law.

⁸⁵ Martha Chamallas "Past as Prologue: old and new feminisms" (2010) 17 Michigan Journal of Gender and Law 157, and Jill Marshall, "Feminist Jurisprudence: keeping the subject alive" (2010) 14 Feminist Legal Studies 27.

under feminism, have been created (discursively speaking) equal⁸⁶.

Criminalized women,⁸⁷ racialized women,⁸⁸ lesbian moms⁸⁹ and drug carriers⁹⁰ have been 'differently labeled' through a combination of chivalry (sex differences in criminal sentencing), isolation, evasion, and outright demonization.

Demonization, arguably, has been reserved for one of the most discriminated among us, the 'prostitute'.

Stigma, we argue, plays a greater role in the practice and application of law than we like to imagine. Stigma can determine who is arrested, how they are arrested, how those arrested are treated, the type of sentencing and the level of compassion they might receive. Agency in this case is assumed to be just cause for blame. "Reasons for actions, structurally filtered, often become rationalizations appropriate to an individual's vested interests...structural forces such as class, command and gender become invisible".⁹¹ For example, agency of the 'prostitute', not unlike the drug user, is assumed to be an act of will, a type of recrimination that goes beyond the usual 'blaming the victim' scenario to the

⁸⁶ Robert Uy, "Blinded by Red Lights: "Why Trafficking Discourses Should Shift Away From Sex and the "Perfect Victim" Paradigm" (2011) 26 *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice* 204.

⁸⁷ *Supra*, note 82.

⁸⁸ Sherene Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Patricia Monture-Okanee, and Mary Ellen Turpel, "Aboriginal Peoples and Canadian Criminal Law: Rethinking Justice" (1992) 26 *University of British Columbia Law Review* 239.

⁸⁹ Shelley Gavigan "A Parent(ly) Knot: Can Heather Have Two Mommies?" in *Legal Inversions: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Politics of the Law*, Didi Herman and Carl Stychin, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995) 102.

⁹⁰ Gayle MacDonald and Josephine Savarese, "Drug Mules, Drug Moms and Criminal Justice: Mothering and Redemption in Film and in Law" (2010) 60 *New Brunswick Law Review* 230.

⁹¹ Graham Scambler, "Sex Work Stigma: Opportunist Migrants in London" (2007) 41 *Sociology* 1079 at 1092

'you made your bed, you lie in it' type of maxim. In a way, the sex worker is seen to be choosing her own criminalization and stigmatization. Duff⁹² deals with this idea as a moral one, and one he assumes cannot be captured in criminal law, as it is outside of the purview of law (at least philosophically speaking). It raises the question as to whether or not the 'prostitute' has agency, if choice is seen to be forced.⁹³

One of the more interesting developments both theoretically and in practice in the criminal law for a sociologist of law is the tendency to treat what are in practice highly fluid categories as fixed and stable. *Mens rea* and *actus reus*, loosely translated from the Latin, mean mind's knowledge of intent and action, and refer in the criminal law to denote both aspects of a criminal act, most specifically in terms of sanction imposed.

This tendency has been noted previously⁹⁴ as a re-read of Anthony Duff⁹⁵ who states "despite (or perhaps partly because of) the central role which the concept of intention plays in the criminal law, we still lack a clear or agreed account of its meaning".⁹⁶ It does, he argues, have "different shades of meanings' in different

⁹² *Supra* note 83.

⁹³ Compelling philosophical arguments on feminism and prostitution are presented in Linda LeMonchek, *Loose Women, Lecherous Men: A Feminist Philosophy of Sex*. (New York: Oxford U Press, 1987).

⁹⁴ Gayle MacDonald "Intention and Agency in Criminal Law: What does Sociology have to do with it?" (presented to the American Society of Criminology, New Orleans, Louisiana, November, 1992); Gayle MacDonald, "*In absentia*: women and the sexual as a social construct in law" in MacDonald, Osborne, and Smith (eds) *Feminism, Law, Inclusion: intersectionality in action* (Toronto: Sumach Press 2005); and in *supra* note 4.

⁹⁵ Anthony Duff, *Intention and Agency and Criminal Liability: Philosophy of Action and the Criminal Law* (London: Blackwell, 1990).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* at 15.

contexts of different uses [which then] becomes critical to determine which of these ‘shades’ is ...relevant to its legal usage”.⁹⁷ The difference between *intentional* and *intention* is drawn out in his argument, as well as the coupling of intention (*mens reus*) with agency (*actus reus*) in the common criminal usage. Among other points, Duff argues that we need, morally, to bring about a sense of “responsible agency”.⁹⁸ This reference could be thought of as our British inheritance of the concept of ‘responsible’ government; however, what it really points to is the ability to form intent, which then informs the ability to act responsibly.

This fits with the interpretive understanding in sociology of intention and agency generally. From a sociological standpoint intention and agency have always been fluid; which is true of the lack of fluidity in the underlying concepts which inform popular accounts of stigma. To explain, the following review of theorizing on stigma in sociological literature reveals that the most widely used account of the concept⁹⁹ relies heavily on the idea of identity as stable, as the internalization of a demeaning label that implies that the only form that agency can take in this theorizing is that of stigma management,¹⁰⁰ a static and pre-determined form of agency. In the following section we provide a brief history of the “state” of theorizing on stigma, this precedes the third and final section,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* at 33.

⁹⁸ *Supra* note 95 at 37.

⁹⁹ Erving Goffman, *Stigma; Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

¹⁰⁰ Rebecca Meisenbach, “Stigma Management Communication: A theory and Agenda for applied research on how individuals manage moments of stigmatized Identity” (2010) 38 *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 268.

where we open the theoretical space that reliance on Goffman has effectively closed. We do this to offer new directions for exploring stigma that both takes radical forms of agency and affect into account and has the capacity to explore the moment of “the gaze” in ways that go beyond traditional theorizing on stigma. The following section reviews this traditional theorizing to begin to unpack some of the shortcomings of stigma theory in terms of its explanatory power for our opening anecdote.

Stigma’s Shtick in the Social Sciences: An Historical Overview

Conceptualizations of stigma differ based on the sociological paradigm from which one approaches the subject. Durkheim, one of the first to explore stigma in the discipline of sociology, provides a functionalist view of stigma in his statement that “the establishment of a sense of community is facilitated by a class of actors who carry a stigma and stigmatization and are termed deviant”.¹⁰¹ In the process of stigmatizing deviant behaviour, group unity is achieved; the group unites against those who threaten the social order, and in doing so demarcates a boundary around acceptable behaviour, creating a collective sense of morality. For Durkheim, creating a boundary through the stigmatization of deviant group members is functional in that it strengthens group solidarity. Durkheim’s theorizing contains an important and related point concerning the social construction of stigma. Here, stigma is not an essential characteristic of a person or act, as, for stigmatized people, “what confers this

¹⁰¹ Durkheim, cited in Gerhard Falk, *Stigma: How we Treat Outsiders* (Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 2001) at 18

character upon them is not the intrinsic quality of a given act but that definition which the collective conscience lends them".¹⁰² This idea that stigma is dependent on social context is common to all subsequent sociological writings on stigma, and, outside of the functionalist perspective, is Durkheim's greatest contribution to the sociological conceptualization of stigma.

The functionalist view of stigma was furthered by sociologists such as Parsons, in his exploration of the "sick role";¹⁰³ here, the concept of stigma emerges from the framework of the sick role, and the accompanying idea of 'sanctioned deviance'. Parsons was developing these ideas in the 1950s, and new conceptualizations of deviance were on the horizon. Indebted to the work of Mead and Cooley, Lemert's initial insights into symbolic interactionism had a profound influence on the development of the labelling perspective, which became widely used in the sociology of deviance. Lemert developed the ideas of primary and secondary deviation;¹⁰⁴ primary deviance is defined as the experience connected to the original behaviour, while secondary deviance refers to the role created to deal with the societal reaction to that behaviour. Becker¹⁰⁵ further developed the idea of the deviant role, describing the process of how it is that a person actually adopts a deviant role. In *The Other Side*, he called for a "focus on deviance as an interpretive process involving both

¹⁰² Emile Durkheim, "The Normal and the Pathological" in Henry Pontell (ed.), *Social Deviance: Readings in Theory and Research* (N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005) at 36

¹⁰³ Kai Erikson, "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance" (1962) 9 *Social Problems* 307.

¹⁰⁴ Edwin Lemert, "Primary and Secondary Deviation" in Henry Pontell (ed.), *Social Deviance: Readings in Theory and Research* (N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005) at 75.

¹⁰⁵ Howard Becker, *Outsiders; Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).

deviants and non-deviants”,¹⁰⁶ stating that one consequence of viewing deviance in this way is that sociologists become much more interested in the process by which deviants are defined by the rest of society. This process, that is, society’s response to perceived difference, is the basis of labelling theory, now widely used in the sociology of deviance.

Stigma is a central concept in this labelling approach to deviance, and Goffman’s account of stigma developed along this idea of societal response to difference. However, rather than studying the process of deviantization, Goffman explored the different types of stigma, how people manage stigmatized identities and control information about themselves. Goffman traces the origins of the term stigma back to the Greeks, who used the term to refer to “bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier”.¹⁰⁷ He defines stigma as an attribute that is deeply discrediting, referring to a double perspective concealed in the term, in that there is a difference between the discredited, one who assumes his difference is known, and the discreditable, or one who assumes his difference is not known or immediately perceivable. Thus, he attends to the language of relationships, rather than attributes. Goffman further refines his definition of stigma, identifying three “grossly different types”¹⁰⁸ ; first, there are abominations of the body, next there are blemishes of individual character, and finally there are the tribal stigma

¹⁰⁶ Howard Becker, *The Other Side; perspectives on Deviance* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964) at 2

¹⁰⁷ Erving Goffman, “Stigma and Social Identity” in Henry Pontell (ed.), *Social Deviance: Readings in Theory and Research* (N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005) at 77

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* at 79

of the race, nation, and religion. He also defines those who are not stigmatized, stating that those who do not possess an undesired different-ness, those who -- "do not depart negatively from the particular expectations at issue [--] I shall call the *normals*".¹⁰⁹ This definition has been widely used in the social sciences since its development, and while the term is widely used to describe any disreputable person, group, occupation, etc., stigma "remains a relatively imprecise concept".¹¹⁰

A review of sociological understandings of stigma reveals a lack of cohesion, outside of a reliance on Goffman, with regards to the definition of this concept; in fact, Manzo¹¹¹ claims that the concept has become 'under-defined' and 'over-used' in the social sciences. Although disagreement about definitions do exist, there appears to be consensus that in the case of societal and situational deviance, social norms play a role;¹¹² that is, stigma is usually attached to norm infractions that result in the devaluation of the person. Overall, there is a great deal of theoretical work that could be done around the concept of stigma, to move it in a direction which more accurately reflects the perceptions of those who experience it, as with the woman in our opening example.

Manzo¹¹³ states that "stigma is an element of sociologists' belief system: stigma is, for the practical purposes of doing sociology, an objective phenomenon for

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ John Manzo, "On the Sociology and Social Organization of Stigma: Some Ethnomethodological Insights." (2004) 27 *Human Studies* 401.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

¹¹² Robert Page, *Stigma*. (London: Routledge, 1984).

¹¹³ *Supra* note 110.

the existence of which is presumed and which is deployed unreflectively for analytic and descriptive purposes”.¹¹⁴ Thus, he calls for a reworking of stigma, from an ethnomethodological standpoint, which would treat stigma critically, rather than always assuming its definition is known. He proposes ethnomethodology as the sociology of sociology; or, providing the ability to look at the “non-everyday knowledge” of the social sciences, and addresses stigma as an analytic and discursive resource in the realm of sociology. He uses the lived experiences of stroke patients to examine stigma from the perspective of their lived reality, instead of from the definition provided by the social sciences. His analysis show that sociological definitions of stigma have little grounding in reality, or to the way real people orient to the concept. He calls for a grounded approach that would make stigma “real” for participants, rather than being only what sociologists choose to call it. His central finding, that stigma is under defined and over used, and his solution, that we start with the lived experiences of individuals, is a good one, although it doesn’t go as far as we need in order to outline how we actually capture those lived moments of stigma. His use of ethnomethodology is a step in the right direction, but it still does not address the structural aspects of stigma. As well, the reliance on a “common sense” view of the world may slightly miss the mark, as there is more to stigma than common sense understanding. As outlined in the example of “the look”, stigma is also about feeling and affect, about fleeting moments where the stigmatized person

¹¹⁴*Ibid.* at 410

just “knows” in a way which is visceral. To reiterate, the man in the grocery store did nothing more than look at the woman, a deductive analysis often used in legal argument, would not reveal stigma in that moment, yet the woman “felt” it.

Relatedly, traditional theorizing is also inadequate for analyzing that “felt moment”. Goffman¹¹⁵ views stigma as membership in socially constructed categories of deviance -- it is an attribute, behaviour, or reputation which is socially discrediting in a particular way. Stigma operates when one is classified as ‘other’ rather than as ‘normal’. While this theory does a good job of discussing the intersubjective relations that lead to a person being attributed a stigma, or labelled stigmatized, what it ignores is the larger social structures and institutions at play here. These social structures are addressed by structural/functionalist theorists, such as Durkheim, who focused on the function of deviance as maintaining social order, creating a boundary through the stigmatization of deviant group members, functional in that it strengthens group solidarity.

While the concept of stigma is well-used to the point of theoretical exhaustion in research on the experiences of the marginalized, stigma seems to have little variation in complexity depth and explanatory power from the original Goffman theory. This is not to say that the 40-year, metaphorical ride on Goffman’s coat tails has not produced useful research, but rather, that very little theorizing about the concept has occurred since. What we are calling for here is a shift in

¹¹⁵ *Supra* note 99.

focus, from Goffman's management of stigma, to the moment/context in which stigma occurs/is experienced, as these moments are reflective of both structure and agency, and are at the same time highly political in nature. The ways in which these theoretical inadequacies could be rectified is the focus of the following section.

For example, if the process of degradation, of demeaning, of isolating a person or group occurs as a particular practice, is experienced as a certain set of behaviours, has consequences either behaviourally or felt as discrimination, then this act has a beginning, a point in time at which the consequences of stigmatizing begin to take effect. To explain how the effects are managed is to explain behaviour change. To explain the felt sensation of "the look" Thrift¹¹⁶, in his focus on affect, provides the tools to analyze the feeling in that moment. We believe this shift must occur at the theoretical level; non-representation theory is well suited to these endeavours. What is to come calls for open minds, creative spirits, and the disavowal of a propensity for the fixity of the earlier theory.

More Than a Feeling: Affect, Stigma and Law

What follows is what is now necessary, a theoretical explanation of the politics of everyday life for the sex worker, a sexualized rendering of them to the label, rather than a full expression of her humanity. Non-representational theory¹¹⁷ offers specific ideas within an interdisciplinary blend of critical geography,

¹¹⁶ Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

anthropology, feminist sociology, cultural studies, and philosophy which are very well suited to address the politics of everyday life as they unfolded in our grocery store example. As Vaninni discusses, Thrift theorizes the intimate relationship between senses/emotions and the political¹¹⁸. In exploring the politics of affect, Thrift notes: "I will not be making the silly argument that just about everything which now turns up is political, in some sense or the other, but I will be arguing that the move to affect shows up new political registers and intensities"¹¹⁹. Thus, in order to get in touch with the full range of registers of thought, affect and sensation must be given priority.

This point has serious implications when applied to stigma; it encourages us, in Thrift's words, to "give weight to intuition as thinking-in-movement, foreground the 'underlanguage' of gesture"¹²⁰. This point is especially relevant when one considers sex workers and their experiences, especially as outlined in the introduction. In the grocery store example, it was the woman's intuition which alerted her to the "underlanguage" of "the look"; the subjection to stigmatization in that moment was all about affect and the minutia of the sensation of being gazed at. Non-representational theory enriches the concept of stigma by accounting for social processes like these that are continual yet felt in specific moments; which are formed and shaped through social structures, yet

¹¹⁸ Phillip Vannini, "Nonrepresentational Theory and Symbolic Interactionism: Shared Perspectives and Missed Articulations" (2009) 32 *Symbolic Interaction* 282 at 284

¹¹⁹ Nigel Thrift, "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect" (2004) 86 *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 57 at 58

¹²⁰ *Supra* note 116 at 14.

experienced in social, cultural, and embodied spaces. In theorizing a “geography of what happens”,¹²¹ Thrift attempts to

[D]evelop a body of work that emphasizes the development of sensitivities (or disclosure), rather than knowledge, per se, toward all of the everyday practices that usually go unnoticed in the background of our lives, practices which take place in an intermediate and indeterminate in-between what we currently frame as behaviour or action.¹²²

This is what we aim for -- to look at the in between of stigma, of the moments where stigma operates, to see what exists there that is not captured by our traditional theorizing on the concept. As one participant stated:

Go to Walmart or wherever, you'd always run into the guy and his wife and feel...[pausing] I would just look at him and half smile and go on. You know? ...Make sure the wife didn't see! (5)

We are interested in that feeling in that moment and the moment in the introduction anecdote, what it means and how we can theorize stigma in a way which captures it.

In *Non-Representational Theory*¹²³ Thrift, like us, aims to focus on what is present in experience by focusing on the intricacies of moments such as in the experience of the stigmatized. Thrift prefers descriptions of the bare bones of actual occasions, which postulate a move away from sociology's “dependence on the performed subject”.¹²⁴ Thus, for a theory of stigma to focus on moments,

¹²¹ *Ibid* at 2.

¹²² *Ibid* at 71.

¹²³ *Ibid*.

¹²⁴ *Ibid* at 5.

we must move away from Goffman's performed subject,¹²⁵ and begin to think and theorize differently than has been done in the past. Thrift offers some guidance here, in the form of his seven tenets of non-representational theory¹²⁶; these are reviewed below, in order of relevancy for our project.

For our considerations, the most important pieces of NRT revolve around Thrift's attention to varied and unconventional forms of agency. (1.) NRT is concerned with capturing the 'onflow' of everyday life, or life as a becoming in time-space that transcends consciousness. He emphasizes the power of the pre-cognitive as an instrument of sensation - indeed, in the grocery store example, in being on the receiving end of "the gaze" the woman felt the stigma before she thought it. (2.) As well, a second tenet of NRT is that it is anti-biographical and pre-individual; Thrift challenges us to get rid of an artificial sense of wholeness. Combined, these two tenets inform a critique Goffman's theory for its focus on the relationship between identity and stigma. For Goffman, personal identity is comprised of "identity pegs, and the unique combination of life history items that comes to be attached to the individual with the help of these pegs for his [*sic*] identity";¹²⁷ thus, identity is defined as the more or less abiding characteristics of an individual, an example of the artificial sense of wholeness Thrift expunges. The stability inherent in this definition of identity supposes that people who are stigmatized can be agentive only in the

¹²⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959).

¹²⁶ *Supra* note 116

¹²⁷ *Supra* note 99 at 57

management of their stigmatized identity. This is a very limited form of agency indeed; an agency equally as static as the identity by which it is pre-determined. To remedy this point, we focus on the relationship between stigma and subjectivity, which can be described as the interaction between the moment and the person in it.¹²⁸

Subjectivity is anything but stable, and the forms of agency which exist here are anything but pre-determined. "Individuals are generally understood as effects of the events to which their body parts (broadly understood) respond and in which they participate".¹²⁹ Thus, subjectivity involves identity, but it is more than identity in that it involves agency. In making this move from identity to subjectivity, from a decidedly stable, fixed concept to one which embraces flow, change and adaptation, we are opening space in our theorizing for the idea of *resistance*. A female participant spoke about the fact that the relationship between stigma and subjectivity was very much mediated by resistance for her:

You just know in your heart after years of teaching yourself that when someone looks at you and calls you a whore or a prostitute or a slut, you know in your heart that you're not that, you know? You just... you build it, you build your own character, you build who you are. And part of street working made me who I am. Made me determined, made me stubborn it made me strong. (3)

Thus, stigma does not map onto identity, that maps onto restricted agency, in one neat, tidy process of determination. Rather, stigma is ugly and messy, the

¹²⁸ The relationship between stigma and subjectivity goes beyond this, to include a structural component, or the relationship between subjectivity and institutionalized power relations. Thrift cannot address this, and the discussion is furthered in Publication Two, where the concept of misrecognition does the theoretical lifting necessary to attend to these concerns.

¹²⁹ *Supra* note 116 at 60.

ways that it operates are complex, and, as the lived experiences of individuals who experience stigma reveals, it is resisted in ways that are varied, unconventional, and sometimes unrecognizable as forms of resistance.

If we theorize stigma in this way, as related to subjectivity rather than identity, then it follows that stigma cannot be reduced to identity categories, as was the case in *Students who Strip*.¹³⁰ Here, in line with Goffman, the authors employ identities as fixed categories; the 'girls' [*sic*] have a stable deviant stripper identity, as well as an alternate, stable student identity that offers them protection from the stigma associated with their deviant side. This is in line with Goffman's belief that "characteristic discrepancies are likely to occur between virtual and actual social identity, and characteristic efforts are made to manage the situation";¹³¹ thus, we have two different identities that we are always trying to manage.

If, alternatively, we theorize identity as constructed from one's positioning within a web of social/power relations, we conclude that no identity is stable; thus, instead of shifting back and forth between two stable identities, people who do both school work and strip work construct their identities in a fluid and mobile way. It is not as if they have a stable deviant identity and they must do work to

¹³⁰ Mary Nell Trautner and Jessica Collett, "Students Who Strip: The Benefits of Alternate Identities for Managing Stigma" (2010) 33 *Symbolic Interaction* 257.

¹³¹ *Supra* note 99 at 55.

manage this, rather, they are always constructing and reconstructing their identity based on their positioning within a changing web of social relations.

In contrast, Barton and Hardesty¹³² offer an analysis of stigma that is more in line with subjectivity than identity. The authors examine the spiritual lives of exotic dancers and find that “spirituality operates as a narrative resource for informants performing a stigmatized identity”. Thus, the topless bars are theorized as spaces in which women can subjectively experience themselves as spiritual beings. Here, spirituality and stripping are not separate identities, as in the student/strippers article; rather, they are theorized as complex parts of a subjectivity that is fluid and always in the process of creation. That was echoed with one research participant who stated:

It's a part of me. It's a part I love. I don't know how big it is but I enjoy it (18)

This leads us to a discussion of stigma as a complex, and multifaceted phenomenon, which cannot be reduced simply to the labelling of either acts or people, in that it involves both structure and agency. Thrift stresses the importance of rejecting fixity, “the conflation of personhood with subjectivity, and the centrality of rational and reflexive consciousness”.¹³³ These rejections fit well with subjectivity, highlighting the importance of linking subjectivity rather than identity with this particular theorizing of stigma.

¹³² Bernadette Barton and Constance L. Hardesty, “Spirituality and Stripping: Exotic Dancers narrate the body Ekstasis” (2010) 33 *Symbolic Interaction* 280.

¹³³ Phillip Vannini, “Nonrepresentational Theory and Symbolic Interactionism: Shared Perspectives and Missed Articulations” (2009) 32 *Symbolic Interaction* 282 at 285

Given the propensity for agency in critical geography, Thrift's mother discipline,¹³⁴ it is not surprising that his theory speaks to us in our attempts to re-conceptualize the interworkings of stigma; what is surprising, however, are the steps Thrift takes on the path to agency. Theoretically, *Thrift gets at both agency and resistance through a concentration on small moments, and on the interaction between affect and practices in those moments*. In terms of the moment of "the gaze" captured in our opening anecdote, this approach offers the possibility to unpack agency, which can certainly include stigma resistance, in moments such as these. There are many subtleties of movement, or practices, that could be agentive (or not) on the part of the woman; did she hang her head and walk away, or turn on her heel and leave in a commanding way? Even the act of a lack of bodily response from her could potentially strip the man's "gaze" of its power; indeed, the concentration on the "in between" of small moments opens a multitude of space for thinking about agency and resistance.

(3.) Thrift believes that affect and sensation should be as important as are signs and significations in the social sciences. He views "the senses and emotions not as subjects for micro-sociological empirical attention but as the engine of political regeneration".¹³⁵ Here, the everyday becomes political, and affect and sensation become important players in these politics. Importantly, for Thrift, affect is not simply another word for emotion. In NRT, affect is socio-spatial,

¹³⁴ In critical geography, cities/towns are viewed as agentive environments, created purposefully by people; thus, the theme of agency runs deep in this interdisciplinary approach Emrys Jones, *Towns and Cities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966)

¹³⁵ *Supra* note 119 at 284.

fundamentally geographic phenomenon that is about the relational bodily capacities that emerge and develop in moments. Affect is expressed by bodies and has multiple registers of experience. Movements of affect are expressed through visceral shifts in bodies and, being relational, occur in the in-between of moments rather than being registered in the mind of the individual (as we generally think of feelings).

(4.) Relatedly, Thrift's NRT is also concerned with practice, action and performance. Thrift is weary of the rigidity of structuralist heritage in the social sciences and is suspicious of attempts to uncover symbolic meaning where more practical forms (such as those informed by affect and sensation) exist. If, as discussed in a section previous, our theorizing requires fluid accounts of identity, then "our ways of living, thinking or writing change according to the plane upon which we find ourselves".¹³⁶ Thus, in order to get in touch with the full range of registers of agency, affect and sensation must be given priority. This point has serious implications when applied to stigma and law; it encourages us, in Thrift's words, to "give weight to intuition as thinking-in-movement".¹³⁷ This point is especially relevant when one considers "the look" and its underlanguage in our example.

The woman's intuition, her sensation of being looked at, and the associated affect in the interaction are of the utmost importance; they are part of the

¹³⁶ *Supra* note 116 at 13.

¹³⁷ *Supra* note 116 at 14.

“biological-cum-cultural gymnastics”¹³⁸ Thrift describes in his discussion of affect. How ‘the look’ was delivered and received is of the utmost importance here; in contrast, Goffman states that “the info of the most relevance in the study of stigma has certain properties. It is information about an individual. It is about his more or less abiding characteristics, as opposed to the moods, feelings, or intents that he might have at a particular moment”.¹³⁹ Thus, it is not enough here to rely on Goffman, as his focus on stigma management means that for him, contextuality can only be concerned with how deviance is defined in a particular situation; he sees context as that which defines what is deemed normal and non-normal. Goffman’s concepts of normal/non-normal are in and of themselves examples of the forms of symbolic interpretations that Thrift wishes to replace with a deeper focus on affect and sensation.

Stigma can also be related to affect and sensation, rather than behavioural characteristics, as Goffman would have it. Thrift states, “how things seem is often more important than what they are”.¹⁴⁰ This quote could be interpreted as implying that we are simply concerned with perception here; this, however, is not the case because there is power involved in who defines ‘how things seem’, and by this Thrift means ‘how they are experienced’; he is highlighting this in order to point to the importance of affect. To say it is only about perception would mean that the only role affect plays is in defining the situation; we argue

¹³⁸ *Supra* note 116 at 71.

¹³⁹ *Supra* note 99 at 43.

¹⁴⁰ *Supra* note 116.

that it (affect) is highly related to stigma, agency, and resistance. A female participant spoke about a situation where affect played a direct role in agency and resistance to a situation her friend was in. She recounted a situation with that friend and a violent client:

*He was like I'm gonna fucking cut you up, I'm gonna cut off your clothes, rape you, whatever, and she goes hold on a minute, I wanna enjoy this too and I still need my clothes.... and he just stopped. And he didn't know what to do - right? Like most people, if they're gonna get raped, they're like *squeals* oh no, I'm sorry! Don't do it! I'll do anything! ... Agree with him, go along with it, and they're just gonna be like... what now? It's awesome knowing how and having the power to turn negative situations around so then you have the power instead of the trick. it is... it makes you feel more safer. (5)*

Her friend uses the momentary shift in affect to not only change perception of the situation, but to resist and flip the power balance of the encounter. In the context of the interview in the telling of this story, the young woman was on another level resisting the perception of sex workers as victims. This example is also illustrative of another of the seven tenets of NRT; (5.) Thrift discusses relational materialism, or the idea that material objects are endowed with relational agency, and in doing so rejects the separation between corporeality, materiality and sociality. In this case, the woman's clothes played an important part of the encounter. At first, they were part of what the client was using to threaten her and deny her agency; in stating "I still need my clothes" she focused on them in order to flip the script and take back her power and agency in the situation. In viewing the situation this way, the clothes take on life and become a pivotal player in the encounter.

Returning to the weight Thrift places on sensation, the importance of affect for stigma, and the related links between stigma and law, are exemplified in the legal situations that sex workers often encounter. Ticktin¹⁴¹ discusses a French anti-crime law that, in the name of ‘security’, criminalizes what is called ‘passive soliciting’. While couched as a means of protecting women from trafficking and prostitution, the law means that, in reality, “any woman whose dress or attitude gives the impression that she is soliciting money for sex can face both a fine and extended jail time”.¹⁴² Crucially, the term ‘passive soliciting’ is defined in such a way that the police have full discretion in determining what behaviours constitute ‘soliciting’, since it is defined as passive, not active. There is an element of “the gaze” inherent here as well, as police must surveil women in order to observe soliciting. Stigmas surrounding sex work undoubtedly play into what constitutes an ‘impression’ of soliciting; the police must rely on affect and sensation, what they ‘feel’ is going on in a moment, in order to comply with this ambiguous law.

The politics of everyday life are evident in the example cited above, as the social structures that produce stigma around sex work are played out in these circumstances. In the experiences of the sex workers in Ticktin’s study, stigma is felt and experienced in very complex ways that are intertwined with both criminal law and the enforcement of those laws. Laws relating to prostitution

¹⁴¹ Miriam Ticktin, “Policing and Humanitarianism in France: Immigration and the Turn to Law as State of Exception” (2005) 7 *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 346.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* at 353.

“inflict particularly heavy penalties on street prostitutes, they seek to protect prostitutes in a paternalistic way, they blend attempts at rehabilitation and punishment and are generally discriminatory against women”.¹⁴³

That sex workers in general are particularly vulnerable to forms of state control is well documented in the literature. Jeffrey and MacDonald¹⁴⁴ report that for many of the workers they spoke with, a daily burden was the potential conflict with police and the law; “sex workers spoke about the constant fear of arrest, potential harassment by police, the attitudes of judges, and the legal system as a source of constant frustration and anger in their lives”.¹⁴⁵ Thus, sex workers are subject to social control at a frequency much higher than that of the average citizen because of a legal framework that positions them as points of intervention for regulatory power. One mother who was engaged in sex work to support her daughter noted:

I'm always afraid, I'm always feels like I'm walking on egg shells because if child services finds out, I'll probably end up losing my little girl for good. (10)

This account seems to position sex workers as helpless in the face power; however, as the following section illustrates, this is not always the case and sex workers are well able to resist and take back power in a myriad of ways. In the conclusion below, we review the final two tenets of NRT and explore their relation to the methods used in the current research study to capture a very

¹⁴³ *Supra* note 74 at 91.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* at 105

particular form of resistance (i.e. through the “talk back” of sex workers), as well as the potential of NRT to inform future research focused on the embodied resistance of sex workers.

Conclusion: She Can’t be Resisting (?) Or Can She? - Resisting the Stigma of Sex Work and Law.

Thrift warns us to “always be suspicious that the difference between ‘large’ and ‘small’, ‘macro’ and ‘micro’, ‘general’, and ‘specific’ is necessarily significant”.¹⁴⁶ This is extremely relevant to the research at hand because, as explained in Chapter Three, there was no large scale, organized community advocacy/resistance happening in St. John’s at the time of this research; thus, the research instead focused on the many ways sex workers resist stigma in the minutia of their everyday talk. In line with Thrift’s quote above, these micro resistances are no less significant than more macro political organizing and are in and of themselves highly political.

The two remaining tenets of NRT also speak to the methodology of the current research, in that (6.) NRT is meant to be highly experimental and disavows methodological fetishism, refusing a social science obsessed with control, prediction, and the will to explain and understand everything. This fits well with Miller’s concept of “the poverty of truth-seeking analysis”, referred to in Chapter Two, and with her very specific form of discourse analysis employed here¹⁴⁷. In

¹⁴⁶ *Supra* note 116 at 21.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter Two for a full discussion of this methodology.

line with this tenet, Thrift calls for a sense of wonder to be injected back into the social sciences - a good first step to this is getting outside of a truth-seeking analysis and contemplating deeply our role as researchers and theorists, as Miller does. Lastly, (7.) NRT is about an “ethics of novelty”, or a “new ethics built on the craftsmanship of everyday life and existing on the interstices of interaction”¹⁴⁸. This quote speaks to the ethical discussion of trust and power dynamics between sex workers and researchers, as explored in Chapter Two; issues explicitly addressed in the methodological approach of the current research.

These novel ethical considerations, outside of the usual concerns of ethics within social science research, were a major factor in the methodological direction of this research, and thus are an important part of the research philosophy. In research about stigma, consideration of the novelty of ethics concerned with the “interstices of interaction” means attending to the power dynamics of research itself. That the process of stigmatization unfolds along the lines of power and powerlessness in society has been documented and theorized¹⁴⁹ yet, resistance has not¹⁵⁰ that is to say, while resistance in sex

¹⁴⁸ *Supra* note 116 at 15

¹⁴⁹ Richard Parke and Peter Aggleton, “HIV and AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination: A Conceptual Framework and Implications for Action” (2003) 57 *Social Science & Medicine* 13; Bruce Link and Jo Phelan, “Conceptualizing Stigma” (2001) 27 *Annual Review of Sociology* 363.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Ellen Faulkner and Gayle MacDonald (eds), *Victim No More: Women’s Resistance to Law, Culture and Power* Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Books, (2009).

worker populations has been documented in research¹⁵¹, it has not been explicitly theorized in relation to stigma.

Examples of resistance that exist below the surface, as do most resistance techniques in oppressed groups¹⁵², certainly exist in the current research project¹⁵³, as well as in other research with sex workers. For example, it has been found that sex workers sometimes use their deviant 'identity' as a form of 'sticking it to the man', both in terms of refusing waged labour and the 'boss' identities that accompany such jobs¹⁵⁴. A manifestation of this genre renders her ability to stay 'independent' of the strictures of normative work life, to be 'her own boss' and to make decisions on when, how and with whom she will work. Goffman's theory implies that sex workers can only manage information about their 'spoiled' identity; in direct opposition to this, the sex workers cited above are using that 'spoil' to their advantage in a way that is not managing their

¹⁵¹ Kong, in his discussion of sex workers in Hong Kong, states "The gendered sex hierarchy, crystallized as the whore stigma, is strongly installed in their lives through different local social agents of surveillance and also embedded in various social and political institutions. ...their body politics lie in their daily life practices which show their micro-resistance in the process of making money out of their bodies, their cunning tricks in handling various abuses and dangers and their survival strategies in maneuvering through a complex web of power and domination." Travis Kong, "What It Feels Like for a Whore: The Body Politics of Women Performing Erotic Labour in Hong Kong" (2006) 13 *Gender, Work and Organization* 430./ See also Jolanda Sallmann, "Living With Stigma: Women's Experiences of Prostitution and Substance Use" (2010) 25 *Affilia* 146; Miyuki Tomura, "A Prostitute's Lived Experiences of Stigma" (2009) 40 *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 51; Ratna Kapur, "Post-Colonial Economies of Desire: Legal Representations of the Sexual Subaltern" (2001) 78 *Denver University Law Review* 855; Venna Talwar Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India" (1990) 16 *Feminist Studies* 259.

¹⁵² James Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹⁵³ See Chapter Three for a discussion of these matters.

¹⁵⁴ Leslie Ann Jeffrey and Gayle MacDonald, "It's the Money, Honey": The Economy of Sex Workers in the Maritimes (2006) 43 *Canadian Review of Sociology* 313.

stigma, but rather managing the situation they are in through the use of their stigma. A female sex worker in the current study spoke to that exact situation:

I'm a good person, but when it comes to men I can be very deceiving and make 'em believe what I want them to believe. I do feel powerful actually, it's just, I feels like I have more control than they do, and that I'm smarter than they are. Well I don't really like what I'm doing, but I feel like I can do or say what I want to get what I want. At the time it makes me feel a bit too confident... a lot of people would say it's not a good thing, it's a bad quality to have. Actually, part of me is glad I got that quality about myself. I find men like innocent women, like younger women, so a lot of times I lie about my age. I play it up like "Oh I never done this kinda thing before, you're just gonna have to ease me through it" - I dunno, it just seems to get the guy more excited. They're buying it.

When you're putting out the bull shit and they're buyin' it, how does that make you feel?

*Cocky! *Laughs* It makes me feel pretty smart, though, for coming up with something like that (10)*

Hence, the strategies of people who find themselves in the small and tight spaces that stigma creates are far more complex than the management of information about themselves.

Here, we are aiming for a theory of stigma that gets at these small moments of resistance that often go unnoticed. In prioritizing the interactions of affect, practices and agency, Thrift offers new avenues for exploring resistance.

Exemplarily, he makes extensive use of dance,¹⁵⁵ as it engages the whole of the senses; "even dances with misogynist narratives or patriarchal themes tend to depict women as active and vital".¹⁵⁶ The movements made by female dancers

¹⁵⁵ Nigel Thrift, "The Still Point: Resistance, Expressive Embodiment and Dance", in Michael Keith and Steven Pile (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997), 124.

¹⁵⁶ *Supra* note 116 at 71.

communicate, through affect, a narrative different than that which lives on the surface of the performance. Women can perform a “repressive” dance, yet they resist these themes in their very movements; an avenue for future research on resistance to sex work stigma could extend this notion of embodied resistance from dance to sex work. Like dancers, sex workers engage in expressive embodiment in their work. In the corporeality of the actual work of sex work, and the minutia of the momentary interactions that occur there, there is a vast world that could be explored using Thrift’s NRT as a guide to research.

What we have not achieved here, and what arguably is the most important part of NRT, is to celebrate and fully explore the interaction of all seven tenets. We believe that this could be captured in future research on the embodied resistance of sex workers to stigma. A sex worker-led research project exploring embodied resistance to stigma in work and life would be a ripe space for the marrying of all seven of Thrift’s tenets: the exploration of life as becoming in time and space; a ridding of an artificial sense of wholeness; a focus on the importance of affect and sensation; a concern with practice, action and performance; the endowing of material objects with relational agency; the injection of experimentally and wonder in the social sciences; and the ethics of novelty, built on the crafts(wo)manship of everyday life. Returning to law, and its role in relation to stigma, the execution of this type of research in environments where sex work is criminalized vs. decriminalized would be an extremely rich situation for comparative analysis. In either case, such a research project would capture the ‘on flow’ of everyday life as felt by the sex worker herself, in her

interaction with clients and in other aspects of her varied life. Indeed, whom better to explore how stigma and resistance play out in the “interstices of interaction” than the sex worker herself?

The foregoing has not been an effort to undermine existing theories of stigma, but rather to create new theoretical space for understanding stigma and how it operates. The value of this for sociological accounts of stigma is that we are better able to capture the lived moments of people who experience it. With regards to law, we hope that the preceding will bring attention to the socio-legal consequences of stigma, especially for the marginalized sex worker.

Arguments for policy changes in law have been made and continue to be made.¹⁵⁷ If decriminalization takes place tomorrow, however, we have no reliable way of knowing that removal of the criminality of sex work will impede or radically alter the process of stigmatizing the worker and the work. What we do know is that stigma acts to compound the criminal, can isolate the bearer of the label and can be inflicted in the momentary glance, the causal gesture, the errant word. It is this weight of the “unsociable” that we hope to explain further. If theory will move with the trend towards decriminalization, we may finally have a day in which neither law nor the type of work one does ostracizes a person to the point of danger.

¹⁵⁷ Leslie Ann Jeffrey and Barbara Sullivan, “Canadian Sex Work Policing for the 21st century: Enhancing rights and Safety; Lessons from Australia” (2009) 3 Canadian Political Science Review 57.

Preface: Chapter Seven

In the conclusion, the preceding publications are woven together to ground the argument for new ways of conceptualizing stigma within the “talk back” of people who do sex work in St. John’s, Newfoundland. A summary of the arguments made throughout each chapter of the dissertation is followed by a discussion section, highlighting both the limits of the current research as well as directions for future research. This chapter is unpublished.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to examine, document and go beyond some of the perceived inadequacies of Goffman's theorizing on stigma and stigma management with specific regard to sex workers (in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador). This task is important, as even today, the majority of sex work literature has explored the impacts of stigma through the lens of Goffman's theorizing. Yet, Goffman's (1963) conceptualization of stigma and its widespread application in the sociological literature has been problematic for a long time. It is doubly problematic because his related concept of 'stigma management' has also escaped serious critique as well. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that this dissertation sought to go beyond these inadequate conceptualizations, both theoretically and empirically, at least with regard to the literature in the sex work field.

Crucially, the standpoint adopted for this research was the exact opposite of Goffman's. Whereas he had quite explicitly sought to theorize the 'stigmatised' from the standpoint of the 'normals', this dissertation ended up being from the perspective of the 'stigmatized'. It attempted to demonstrate that stigma management was not the only form of agency available to sex workers in response to stigma. This was primarily accomplished by utilizing the hybrid theory/method developed by Miller. By utilizing her (2000, 2004) feminist discourse analysis, we saw that sex workers are not only able to resist stigma in their everyday talk, but in doing so, they are also "talking back" to discourses of power. This 'resistance' was demonstrated with regard to everyday relations of

power, where sex workers resisted discourses of 'slut', 'victim' 'whore' etc.; as well as institutional discourses of power (such as religion, law and professional discourses). In other words, stigma was challenged at both micro and macro levels of analysis.

In addition, the dissertation sought to explore possible alternative conceptualizations of stigma and stigma management, ones which aimed to rethink the Goffmanian influence on sex work research. Fraser's theoretical articulation of the concept of 'misrecognition' was examined and found promising because it dealt with both inter-personal and structural features of the issue of 'recognition' – an issue which sex workers face on a daily basis. Thrift's non-representational theory was also examined for its potential to go beyond the close examination of everyday talk, which has been the main topic of this project. His conceptualization may also offer some promise as it seeks to go beyond linguistic interaction and aims to also examine the pre-linguistic worlds of gesture, affect. etc.

Thus, this dissertation in its six substantive chapters has suggested new ways for researchers in the sex work field to provide new insights, theoretical, methodological and empirical, on the phenomena that Goffman inadequately described as 'stigma' and 'stigma management'. Chapter One suggested a theoretical advance by introducing the notion of 'structural stigma' at the macro-level, while also suggesting the utility of Miller's 'underdog discourse analysis' at the micro level. Chapter Two put forward a methodological advance (while also acknowledging the utility of certain other qualitative methodologies) by

suggesting how Miller's Foucauldian adaptation of conversation/discourse analysis, in concert with the new 'research standpoint' that it entailed, could provide new insights into sex worker resistance, at the level of mundane everyday interaction. Chapter Three was mainly concerned with providing the preliminary results of the three methodologies actually discussed in Chapter Two. Demographic information on the participants (gleaned from the original interviews) was presented; information about how a deep sense of 'trust' was established, was also documented (obtained from my belated comprehension of CAR); and insights into how sex workers, in their mundane talk, reversed, challenged and exaggerated dominant cultural understandings, were also demonstrated (in line with Miller's methodology).

Although these first three chapters, in many respects, followed the design of a traditional dissertation (reviews of literature, theoretical discussion, methodological discussion), the final three substantive chapters had a very different format. Each of these was prepared for publication, and two of them have already been successfully published. Nevertheless, they continue this examination into the 'underdog strategies' used by sex workers to resist. Publication One is straightforwardly a continuation of 'resistance'. However, what is most remarkable here is that it primarily articulates a strong sense of the 'structural stigma' that sex workers in St. John's face. That is, institutional religion emerged quite clearly as a form of 'structural stigma' that they regularly faced. In many respects, this finding demonstrates the importance of listening to sex workers' own formulations of their issues. Religion is not often given the

same importance as it had in the 'grammar' of these sex workers. Publications Two and ~Three chart a somewhat different path. That is, they are not just concerned with documenting sex workers' formulations of 'resistance', they are also concerned with exploring alternative theoretical conceptualizations of the issues. So, whereas Publication Two certainly shows how sex workers resist top-down professional discourses (in this case, of harm reduction, and academic 'radical' feminism), it also discusses the utility of Nancy Fraser's work to re-conceptualize 'stigma' and 'stigma management'. ~Publication Three similarly shows sex worker resistance (eg to the institutional discourse of law), but it also explores Thrift's Non-Representational Theory for its potential to go beyond language to embodied activity.

So, as has been seen, this dissertation certainly did attempt to provide insights in these three distinct areas (theory, methodology, empirical results). It also suggests some promising ways forward for future research¹⁵⁸. For example, Weitzer's (2018) concern with stigma resistance and stigma reduction, suggested that "the academic community can play an important role in destigmatizing unconventional behaviour" (p. 8), and as has been seen, this

¹⁵⁸ This section discusses future research others may undertake, informed by the current research project's focus on 'talk back'. Yet, the interview data collected could certainly be germane to other forms of rich analysis. For example, while the philosophy of the current study did not lend itself to more traditional forms of analysis, such as the categorization of sex workers' responses via demographic information (e.g. analyzing responses to stigma via type of sex work), the exploration of the intersection of various types of stigma (such as drug use stigma) with sex work stigma, or the contrasting of NL sex workers with sex workers in other provinces, this type of analysis could be attempted with this data; and it might be able to produce meaningful results. However, these results would potentially contribute to the literature on sex work stigma in a much different way than the current project has. They would not be from the standpoint of the 'stigmatized', but from the standing of a more 'traditional researcher'.

thesis might encourage other researchers to engage in the type of scholar/activist hybrid research demonstrated here. Van der Meulen's approach has certainly begun taking this issue very seriously, and Chapkis (2018) has re-enforced this viewpoint by reminding us all, that this is an 'activist' process (of destigmatising unconventional behaviour) that sex workers themselves have been engaging in for decades.¹⁵⁹ Although this thesis has provided some insights into the self-education required, in order to transform one's conventional theoretical and methodological 'standpoint' so as to carry out this hybrid research, other fledgling scholars may build on this, with regards to their own self-education.

Another potential way forward comes from the recognition that St. John's now has a viable sex worker community collective for collaborative research. This research possibility did not exist when I started my research. But as outlined in detail in Chapter Three, the landscape and potential for future research with sex workers in St. John's has changed drastically with the creation of SHOP (in which I was heavily involved). As St. John's now has a vibrant community of sex workers and allies engaged in activism around sex work, Community Action Research is now a feasible research method and future research might consider partnering with SHOP to engage sex working people. In addition, the types of

¹⁵⁹ That is to say, sex workers themselves have spent tremendous amounts of time and effort already, trying to change dominant understanding about 'sex work'. One of the women interviewed said it best:

It takes people like me with my kinda energy to change people's ideas. When they get to talk to me as a person first, see me as a person, my drive, whatever I'm driven by, just my enthusiasm, and then they find out who I am, it helps them not to judge as much. (Glo)

collective activism that have frequently caught the attention of 'stigma-resistance researchers' have now started to occur in Newfoundland in the years since this research was completed (the last interview was conducted in Oct. 2013, prior to SHOP forming). So, research on the birth of collective resistance and the community building attached to SHOP, as facilitated by the activist/scholar, could now become another fruitful research endeavour and build on the insights I provided in Chapter Three. The formation of the activist/scholar who is more a part of the community, rather than the academy, producing scholarly research outside of the academy (and its related policy-forming centres), rather than from within the academy, may also be a fruitful way forward for future research.

Publication Two also suggested a potential new direction for research, via Fraser's concept of misrecognition. Conceptualizing stigma as misrecognition and then using CAR to explore how collective communities have experienced misrecognition and how they want to advocate in response might also be worth investigating. In other words, whereas the current literature largely frames resistance within the advocacy of collective movements, by rethinking stigma within the framework of misrecognition; this has the potential to combine both the structural and interpersonal together, in the naming of the problem while, at the same time, opening up new space for emerging forms of collective resistance .

Finally, the potential of Non-Representational Theory might also be considered in future research. It has the potential to go beyond Miller's work as well. NRT

places emphasis on the interaction between affect/sensation and practices as they enter the realm of the politics of everyday life. In bringing attention to the unconventional agency found in momentary interactions, NRT demonstrates its relationship to both subjectivity as well as the forms of resistance highlighted throughout this dissertation. So, there is potential to explore forms of resistance as they occur beyond everyday talk, through a focus on the felt moments of embodied experiences. This would open space for exploring sex work as a form of resistance in and of itself in a new way. Thrift's conceptualization of affect and sensation as the engine of political regeneration speaks to an expansion of the idea of talk as political to embodied experiences as political. This approach certainly opens space to include embodied resistance as an area within sex work stigma research.

To conclude, whatever future directions research into sex work might take, I hope that what this dissertation has shown is the importance of listening to sex workers 'talking back'. Not only do such utterances show us the 'agentive' nature of sex workers' lives, but they also display these sex workers' subtlety, skill, and judgment in their everyday interactions. They are, indeed 'artful practitioners' as the ethnomethodologists would say. But they are much more than that. They 'artfully' and 'subtly' choose to 'resist' stigma, when the opportunity arises. Yet, mindful of their 'underdog' status, they simply 'manage' stigma in the course of their many, other interactions. However, the project did not stop there. This dissertation has also attempted to provide theoretical and methodological insights as well as empirical insights. Thus, Goffmanian

theorizing on 'stigma' and 'stigma management' has been shown to have serious shortcomings; and other theorizations have been suggested, instead, as having potential. The 'talk back' of sex workers can not only provide critical analysis of cultural/political conditions of sex work, but of us as social scientists and the concepts we have relied upon to understand the social world.

Finally, traditional methodological approaches to studying sex work stigma were also analyzed and found to have shortcomings. Obviously, these limitations were not as serious as the ones discovered with regard to Goffman's theorizing, nevertheless, an alternative hybrid method/theory was proposed, and its results demonstrated. It remains to be seen whether or not these insights will prove of use to other researchers in this field. Whether or not they glean theoretical or methodological abstractions, hopefully this research has established the necessity of taking the issues of trust and power very seriously, and in doing so encourages other researchers to consider the potential (and perhaps the responsibility, as well) to engage in their own forms of stigma resistance through research.

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(L. Nuttbrock, ed). *Transgender Sex Work and Society*. New York:
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politicization, and direct action (pp. 137-169)*. New York, NY: Nova
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Winters, L., MacDonald, G. (2018). Hypocrisy in “Sin City”: Space, Place and Sex Work Stigma in St. John’s, NL. in *Red Light Labour: Sex work regulation, agency and resistance*. Durisin, E., van der Meulen, E., & Bruckert, C. (eds). Vancouver: UBC Press.

Conference Presentations:

“Dear Survivor: The transformative power of women’s words”, Canadian Domestic Violence Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, March 2020.

“I Still Bleed the Same Colour as You”: Prioritizing the Voices of Women who are Homeless and do Sex Work - Solutions for Support”, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness National Conference on Ending Homelessness, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 2017.

“Everything About Them, Without Them: Sex work policy and the harms of misrecognition,” National Congress, University of Calgary; Calgary, Alberta, June 2016.

“Academics and Activism: the development and implementation of a community support services for people who do sex work in St. John’s, Newfoundland,” National Congress, University of Calgary; Calgary, Alberta, May 2016.

““We Never Heard From ‘Em Again”: A critical analysis of research and community development with sex workers in St. John’s, NL”. In *Community/Academic Research Session*, Session Organizer/Chair and

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“Subjected to Stigma: Methodological considerations around sex work and subjectivity,” 29th Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference. Memorial University of Newfoundland; St. John’s, Newfoundland, June 2012.

“Stigma, Sex Work and Criminalization: Will Sex Workers Ever Achieve Equality?,” Women, The Charter, and CEDAW in the 21st Century: Taking Stock and Moving Forward. Feminist Legal Studies Conference. Queen's University; Kingston, Ontario, March, 2012.

“No Talk Back: Silence and sensationalism around sex work in St. John's, NL,” Signature Panel, *Sex Work Policy Research in Atlantic Canada after "Talking Back": Shaping policy pre- and post- Ontario supreme court challenges*, National Congress. University of New Brunswick; Fredericton, New Brunswick, June 2011.

“Putrid Prostitutes: An examination of Foucault's Theorizing in relation to the first large scale study of prostitution in 19th century France,” National Congress. University of New Brunswick; Fredericton, New Brunswick, June 2011.

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