DISCURSIVE INTERVENTIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS OF SEX WORKERS: BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND THE US FROM 1973-1990

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the ways sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France produced and challenged discourses of sexual labour, "the prostitute" and sexuality between 1973 and 1990. Within these years and in each of these countries, sex workers formed formal activist groups and established transnational networks to challenge the discrimination and criminalisation that sex workers faced. Differences between sex worker activist perspectives, as well as their challenges to radical feminist ideas, have not been centred within the existing literature. Further, within historical literature sex worker activism in the Global North has not been situated within a transnational context. This thesis utilises two theoretical frameworks: first, sex worker activists as producers of feminist knowledge and, second, Gira Grant's "prostitute imaginary". These framed my analysis of materials which document the voices and synthesised analysis of the key sex worker activist groups in the US, Britain, and France. I explore sex workers' narratives of sexual labour, sexual identity and women's sexuality.

This thesis argues, firstly, that sex worker activists refuted the construction of "the prostitute" by introducing new discourses around selling sex. Sex worker activists challenged the association between selling sex and criminality and negligence. Secondly, I argue that sex worker activists disrupted conventional constructions of sexuality. Sex worker activists constructed sexuality through the navigation of both a "work identity" and a "personal identity" in conflicting and ambiguous ways. Lastly, I argue that transnationality was a significant aspect of sex worker activism. Through transnational networks, sex worker activists formulated and honed their analysis and perspectives and supported each other's struggles across borders. Further, through an analysis of the work of certain explicitly transnational groups, I argue that aspects of neo-colonialism were perpetuated by sex worker activism.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference. I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:
Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 34,518 words
Entire manuscript: 37,652 words

Signed: Lola Dickinson

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List of Abbreviations

COYOTE - Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics

ECP - English Collective of Prostitutes

FCP - French Collective of Prostitutes

ICPR - International Committee of Prostitutes' Rights

IPC - International Prostitutes' Collective

NTFP - National Task Force on Prostitution

PLAN- Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense

PONY - Prostitutes Of New York

PROS - Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting

US PROS - The US PROStitute's Collective

VD - Venereal Diseases

WCPR - World Charter of Prostitutes' Rights

WHISPER - Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt

WLM - Women's Liberation Movement

INTRODUCTION

"Why do some of us feel that we can condemn prostitutes?" was a question posed in 1979 by a British sex worker group, the Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS).[1] This question was asked within a statement the PROS contributed to an American sex worker groups' newsletter. The PROS was a sex worker group based in Birmingham, UK, that formed in 1976 and questioned how sex work was constructed, legislated, and policed. It was one group amongst many. In the 1970s and 1980s in the US, Britain and France, sex workers formed formal activist groups, collectives and networks which criticised the construction of "the prostitute" and advocated for a new legal framework around sex work, namely decriminalisation. Starting with the formation of Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) in San Francisco, US, in 1973, many different sex worker groups and collectives emerged within these two decades. Some groups were short-lived, and their activism dwindled, or they were subsumed within other larger groups and campaigns. Other groups remained consistent in their activism throughout the 1970s and 1980s, organising events, formulating analyses, and lobbying for reform, and are still active today, such as the English Collective of Prostitutes and COYOTE.

Sex worker activists within these groups synthesised new theoretical and legal frameworks of sex work and argued for the rights of sex workers as women and as workers. Though these groups had local and national goals, the formation of transnational collectives was crucial to how they developed their theoretical frameworks, supported national efforts and organised events which promoted their shared politics. This thesis focuses on how and why sex worker activists in

[1] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 6, Number 1', 1979, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

the US, Britain and France disrupted constructions of "the prostitute" and sexuality and the role of transnationality within this activism in the 1970s and 1980s.

The main groups that I will focus on include the French Collective of Prostitutes (FCP), the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), the Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS), Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense (PLAN), Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE), US PROStitutes Collective (US PROS), National Task Force on Prostitution (NTFP) and the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR). In this thesis, I analyse how and why these sex worker activist groups intervened in existing discourses on sex work and sexuality while, finally, unpicking the significance of transnationality to this activism.

Sources:

The primary sources used in this thesis comprise materials predominantly created by sex workers between 1973 and 1990 by various sex worker activist groups and individuals. For these materials I have relied on three main archives, the Schlesinger Library in Massachusetts, US, which has documented sex worker activist groups in the US and their transnational collectives, the Bishopsgate Institute in London, UK which holds papers on sex worker groups based in Britain and which related to British activism, and the Modern Records Centre in Coventry, UK which holds materials relating to a specific British group, the Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting. The materials which each of these archives document includes published and unpublished material such as position papers, newsletters, private letters, minutes from meetings, campaign publicity material, and books created and edited by various groups and individuals who were sex worker activists in the 1970s and 1980s.

The materials I have analysed each served different purposes in the activism of sex worker groups. Newsletters, such as COYOTE's "COYOTE Howls" or the PROS "PROS Street Beat",

were written and distributed amongst their membership. While these contain the respective theoretical underpinnings on sex work, they took an informal tone and were mainly centred on providing updates to their membership on events, relevant publications and anecdotal stories from the committee. Newsletters were also interspersed with photographs, cartoons and advertisements. Though occasionally I integrate these visual sources into my analysis, my focus is overwhelmingly on the textual content of these materials.

In contrast to newsletters, position papers and campaign publicity material took a much more formal tone. They rarely have a singular name attached and were used to represent the political aims and concerns of each group to an audience beyond their membership. Though in part, the position papers might be intended to recruit new members, they were also used to assert arguments around sex work into broader debates. Similarly, 'response papers' reacted to a specific contemporary debate or event that had potentially affected the rights of sex workers. For example, these were written in response to specific bills or potential regulations that were discussed by governments, or, discussions by women's groups that they felt misrepresented the interests of sex workers. An example of this includes the ECP's 1984 "Response to the Criminal Law Revision Committee's Working Paper" through which the ECP critiqued potential legislative changes around sex work and argued for the decriminalisation of sex work.[2] These sources are valuable in detailing how sex worker activists positioned their activism, developed their theoretical frameworks, and related to what and whom. I will analyse these sources to consider how sex worker activists framed their sexual labour and their own sexuality within both a national and transnational context.

[2] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Response to the Criminal Law Revision Committee's Working Paper on Offences Relating to Prostitution and Allied Offences', 21 February 1984, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

Several publications that sex worker activists made through and with allied journalists or publishers also form part of my source material. This includes Jaget's *Prostitutes, Our Life* and Delacoste and Alexander's *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*.[3] Claude Jaget was a French journalist sympathetic to the sex worker activism of France.[4] In June 1975, between one hundred and two hundred sex workers occupied Saint-Nizier Church in Lyon, where they remained for a week, to protest the police sentencing of sex workers and the violence which sex workers' faced.[5] During and following this occupation Jaget interviewed the protesters. Jaget edited and published a book, originally published in French with the title *Une Vie de Putain*, which detailed six personal accounts of sex workers in Lyon, all of whom had been part of the occupation. While these accounts are significant, both in how the sex worker activists speak of their lives and their activism, it is also pertinent that these accounts were chosen by Jaget to reflect "the different thoughts and ideas" around sexual labour.[6] Thus, while I take seriously the voices which each chapter details, it is significant that they were carefully selected from amongst other women Jaget spoke to, to further the claims of the women at Saint-Nizier Church. Jaget intended for his book to dispel the construction of "'the prostitute' [which] only exists in films or theatre".[7] The 1980 English translation, *Prostitutes, Our Life,* published by a feminist publisher *Falling Wall Press*, included an introduction and appendix from the English sex worker activist group the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) and an afterword from Margo St James, one of the principal sex worker activists in the US.[8]

[3] Claude Jaget, *Prostitutes, Our Life* (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980); Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, eds., *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (London: Virago, 1988).
[4] Jaget, *Prostitutes, Our Life*, 217.
[5] Lilian Mathieu, 'An Unlikely Mobilization: The Occupation of Saint-Nizier Church by the Prostitutes of Lyon', *Revue Française de Sociologie* 42 (2001): 107, https://doi.org/10.2307/3323055.
[6] Claude Jaget, 'It's a Man's World', in *Prostitutes, Our Life* (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 178.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 2', 1978, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

Delacoste and Alexander's 1988 *Sex Work* is also an edited collection of sex workers' contributions published by a feminist press.[9] The book consists of writings from sex workers who were involved in sex worker activism within the US. Alexander, a prominent member of the US-based sex worker organisation COYOTE), noted that, of the contributors, "Some are members of COYOTE and its sister organizations; others are members of US PROS and its sister organizations. And some are allied with WHISPER".[10] Details of these organisations will be discussed in Chapter Two but what is significant here is that all the contributors were, thus, involved in sex workers' rights activism to varying degrees. The writings within *Sex Work* do not necessarily detail their experience within activism but, rather, their experiences as sex workers. Nonetheless, I take the discussions in *Sex Work* as significant in terms of how sex worker activists detailed their own experiences, and which narratives are selected by the leaders of COYOTE as representative or significant in the context of their activism. As with Jaget's *Prostitutes, Our Life*, Delacoste and Alexander intended to dispel a prevailing construction of sex work which framed "*all* sex workers as victims" but also hoped the book "helps the struggle along".[11] This struggle was both the "prostitutes' rights movement", and the "women's rights movement" as Alexander detailed in the foreword.[12] Thus, the contributors have been selected and edited to appeal to readers and represent "a bridge between sex workers and the rest of the women's movement".[13] Both *Prostitutes, Our Life* and *Sex Work*, thus, represent specific choices which sex worker activists made in how they portrayed their lives and their activism to a general audience.

[9] Frédérique Delacoste, 'Les Putes Sont En Grève...', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (London: Virago, 1988), 12.
[10] Priscilla Alexander, 'Why This Book?', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (London: Virago, 1988), 18.
[11] Delacoste, 'Les Putes Sont En Grève...', 12; Alexander, 'Why This Book?', 18.
[12] Alexander, 'Why This Book?', 14.
[13] Delacoste, 'Les Putes Sont En Grève...', 13.

During the occupation of Saint-Nizier Church in Lyon in 1975, feminist filmmaker Carole Roussopoulos directed and filmed *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent*, a 46-minute documentary/short film to capture the sex workers' lives and objectives during the occupation.[14] Roussopoulos was a Swiss film director who produced many films relating to the French women's movement in the last three decades of the twentieth century.[15] *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* included reflections from sex workers as to why they were protesting, their experiences as sex workers, and their dissatisfaction with the current policing of sex work. This film partly presents interviews of sex workers though the questions which were asked were not included. Those who speak, speak at length about their experiences of sex work and the stigma which surrounded it. This documentary also captured moments from inside the church where sex workers were speaking to one another, not to the camera. *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* is a compilation of material which Roussopoulos recorded each morning of the occupation which was broadcast to passersby in the afternoon, as a way to communicate the demands of the sex workers to those who had gathered without the activists risking arrest.[16] While this film was edited and produced by someone not directly within the sex workers' rights movement, it was made to articulate the aims of the sex workers themselves, and sex worker activists used this as a vehicle through which they could vocalise their demands.

Jaget's *Prostitutes, Our Life,* Delacoste and Alexander's *Sex Work,* and Roussopoulos' *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* are significant in foregrounding the voices of those who sold sex and were involved in activist circles and organisations, however loosely. This is important as these materials present individual, personal reflections of sex workers on their lives. Outside of these

[14] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975).
[15] Stéphanie Jeanjean, 'Disobedient Video in France in the 1970s: Video Production by Women's Collectives', *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 27 (May 2011): 5–16, https://doi.org/10.1086/661606.
[16] Ibid, 13.

publications, the materials I will analyse, such as newsletters, informational booklets and position papers, are useful for understanding how sex worker organisations formulated their arguments and situated their activism, but only occasionally mention the personal or specific experiences of those working in the sex industry.

The voices within the two books and the film have been selected and edited to be compiled and presented to wide audiences. Thus, it must be acknowledged these accounts were selected, may not be representative of broader experiences and have been edited throughout the process to serve as a contribution to the arguments of sex worker activists. This makes them no less valuable, however, for unpicking how sex worker activists chose to construct sexual labour and their own experiences and activism.

The sources I consult do not reflect all sex workers or sex worker activists and this is apparent in several ways. First, this thesis focuses on formal sex worker activist groups. Within these sources, there are hints of the many who sold sex but had no involvement with formal activist networks. The British group Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS) argued in a 1982 newsletter that the "secretive and individualistic way prostitutes are forced to work, does not lend itself easily to a collective campaign".[17] Thus, not all sex workers possessed the time, energy, resources or motivation to be engaged with these formal networks and it was a competitive, isolating industry that limited opportunities for alliances, as gender scholar Crystal Jackson has argued.[18] Further, Gail Pheterson, co-establisher of the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR) and member of COYOTE argued that the "threat of stigmatisation, criminalization

[17] Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 'PROS STREET BEAT, No.6', 1982, 1100/2/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, UK.
[18] Crystal A. Jackson, '"Sex Workers Unite!": U.S. Sex Worker Support Networks in an Era of Criminalization', *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 3-4 (2019): 169-88, https://doi.org/10.1353/wsq.2019.0049.

and violence to "known prostitutes" is devastatingly real".[19] Pheterson noted that to combat being identified as a sex worker "many wear masks or wigs at press conferences and demonstrations. Some actually attend only those meetings held outside their own country".[20] Many who were involved in sex worker organisations used trade names and pseudonyms, or remained anonymous to assure protection, as with the sex worker activists detailed in Jaget's *Prostitutes, Our Life* who are distinguished alphabetically.[21] Many of the sources, including contributors to newsletters and books, highlighted that they "don't have the luxury of using my real name".[22] Thus, the threat of recognition was prominent and also shaped how sex workers engaged in activism.

Second, there were sex worker groups whose work is not currently preserved within a specific archive. Many groups, of varying sizes, arose in this period but only some have donated materials to specific archives, formed their own archives or been archived or catalogued independently. Thus, there are sex worker groups whose existence can only be gleaned through the lens of other sex worker groups. This is the case, for example, for the French Collective of Prostitutes (FCP) and the Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense (PLAN), yet these groups contributed to, for example, the newsletters of COYOTE and PROS and some of their work is preserved within the Scheslinger Library under "Sister Organisations, Related Projects".

Third, the sources I am using in this thesis acknowledge the prevalence of male sex work and transgender sex workers, yet do not centre these individuals in their activism, in their analysis of sex work or in their representation of the experience of sex work. This thesis refers to a select

[19] Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 37.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Jaget, *Prostitutes, Our Life*.
[22] Peggy Morgan, 'Living On The Edge', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste (London: Virago, 1988), 27.

group who were involved in sex worker activism in Britain, France and the US between 1973 and 1990. These groups were not, either, representative of the entire sex industry.

Methodology:

In this thesis, I will mainly analyse materials of sex worker activists using critical discourse analysis as outlined by Fairclough and historical textual analysis.[23] Fairclough's approach involves "seeing texts in terms of different discourses, genres and styles they draw upon and articulate together".[24] Furthermore, this method acknowledges that when "particular discourses are contested, what is generally contested is the power of these preconstructed semantic systems to generate particular visions of the world which may have the performative power to sustain or remake the world in their image".[25] Through discourse analysis of the materials of sex worker activists in the US, France and Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, I explore sex workers' narratives of sexual labour, identity, sexuality and "the prostitute". This involved, at times, contesting existing discourses which contested the power of the "preconstructed semantic systems" around selling sex.[26] This analysis is interpreted within the socio-political context of the legislation and policing of sex work in the US, Britain and France in the 1970s and 1980s, and feminist understandings of sexual labour during the so-called second wave. In conjunction with discourse analysis, I will use historical textual analysis. This acknowledges that "understanding how language and words are used provides insight into social context during historical movements, how groups communicate, and the mutual influence of language and culture".[27]

[23] Norman Fairclough, 'Introduction', in *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9780203697078.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, 130.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Kenneth D. Aiello and Michael Simeone, 'Triangulation of History Using Textual Data', Isis 110, no. 3 (1 September 2019): 522–37, https://doi.org/10.1086/705541

This thesis challenges methodological nationalism by arguing that transnationality was crucial to informing how sex worker activists criticised the policing of sex work and the way they constructed sex work. As historian Stefan Eklof Amirell has argued, methodological nationalism is centred on the nation-state, presuming that "historical narratives and interpretations are thus structured beforehand by national perspectives, limitations, sources, concepts, and categories".[28] In contrast, studying sex worker activism using a transnational approach acknowledges the significance of transnationality not only within the activism itself but within the contextualisation and shared understandings of sex work which the US, Britain and France held. Further, differences in the political perspectives of sex worker groups did not, predominantly, fall along national lines. Rather, these were formed as groups in different nations developed their perspectives through transnational communications as I will discuss in Chapter Five.

Terminology:

This thesis will detail the experiences of selling sex and sexual practices under the terms "sex work" or "sexual labour", and the individuals who sold sex as "sex workers". "Sex work" was a term introduced in 1979 or 1980 by Carol Leigh, a sex worker activist, when she attended a conference in San Francisco by Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media, a "feminist anti-pornography group".[29] Reflecting on the emergence of the term "sex work", Leigh noted in 1997 that she had hoped to create "a discourse about the sex trades that could be inclusive of women working in the trades" and argued that this term was "a feminist contribution to language" in which "increasing stigma and ostracism from within the mainstream feminist movement" was

[28] Stefan Eklöf Amirell, 'The End of Methodological Nationalism: The Internationalization of Historical Research in Sweden since 2000', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 19 December 2021, 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2021.2004219.

[29] Carole Leigh, 'Inventing Sex Work', in *Whores and Other Feminists*, ed. Jill Nagle, 1997, 230, http://site.ebrary.com/id/10763933.

associated with the word "prostitute".[30] Though Leigh argued that "sex work" did not become widely used until 1987, following the publication of Alexander and Delacoste's *Sex Work*, it has been adopted by sex worker activists in the last three decades.[31] Thus, in line with the development of the conceptual framework that sex worker activists have advocated, within this thesis, I will refer to the individuals who sell sex as "sex workers", in contrast to contemporary denominations such as "prostitutes". However, where I will discuss the social constructions of individuals who sell sex, I will consider this under the term "the prostitute", as the construction of "the prostitute" was exactly what activists hoped to critique in their arguments that selling sex was a form of labour.

The denominations for the different political feminist perspectives and approaches, in this context to sex work, have not been consistent. Broadly, I will consider these debates as split between "radical", "liberal" and "socialist" feminist approaches to sex work. This delineation allows for acknowledgement of the differences between sex worker activists' perspectives as well as encompassing the broad range of feminist thought. I will explore the approaches of each of these denominations in section 2.2. However, it still must be acknowledged that within and beyond these denominations there was, of course, a range of political perspectives, especially in relation to sex work. Furthermore, though these denominations are useful to distinguish between feminist thought concerning sex work in this thesis, these have been used by scholars in different ways in reference to other aspects of feminist history.[32]

Thesis Outline:

In Chapter One, I will examine the existing scholarly literature in various fields relating to my thesis and the theoretical frameworks which I will be using. The literature review will include an

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Lorna Norman Bracewell, 'Beyond Barnard', *Signs* 42, no. 1 (2016): 23–48.

overview of patterns of scholarly work in three fields that my thesis contributes to. These are: (1) 1970s and 1980s sex worker activism in Britain, the US and France; (2) debates around sex, pornography, prostitution and trafficking of the women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s; and, (3) transnational sex worker activism. Then, I will detail the main theoretical frameworks and concepts of my thesis. This includes the theoretical frameworks of sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge and the theoretical concept of the "Prostitute Imaginary", a term introduced by present-day sex worker activist Melissa Gira Grant.

Chapter Two will provide contextualisation for sex worker activism. Thus, first, this chapter outlines a brief history of sex work legislation in the US, France, and Britain. This chapter then details the so-called second wave women's movement specifically in relation to the contemporary debates around sex work and sexuality. Lastly, Chapter Two details key sex worker groups that were active in these countries in the 1970s and 1980s and on which this thesis focuses.

In Chapter Three, I explore the discourses around "the prostitute" which sex worker activists challenged and produced. Specifically, I focus on the utilisation of specific discourses of labour and motherhood to challenge contemporary constructions of "the prostitute". I also analyse the way sex worker activists gendered sex work and the differences between sex worker activists in their analysis of "the prostitute" and the policing of sex work as racialised. Lastly, this chapter considers how sex worker activists constructed sex work in relation to the concept of sex trafficking.

The discourses of sexuality that sex worker activists in Britain, France and the US contested and constructed are the focus of Chapter Four. The chapter predominantly utilises sources in which sex worker activists have presented their understandings of sexuality in relation to sex work. The discourses of sexuality which sex worker activists produced formed one part of their activism in

which they argued on the one hand that sex work was no different from other forms of work, and on the other that contemporary understandings of sexuality worked to increase the policing of sex work and women's behaviour more broadly.

In Chapter Five, I analyse sex worker groups' positionality in reference to "transnational" and "international" activism by exploring the communication and efforts by sex worker groups to create both transnational and international networks. I demonstrate that communication and transnational networks, in which already formalised groups contributed to one anothers' campaign in the US, Britain and France, were established from the early stages of sex worker activism in the 1970s. Yet, in the 1980s, especially, some American sex worker groups attempted to form international, centralised groups which intended to represent a standardised argument for the rights of sex workers. I critique certain aspects of sex worker activism that produced neo-colonial discourses.

Sex worker activist groups in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s formulated, synthesised and produced new discourses around sex work and sexuality. Through this, they challenged how sex work was constructed and policed, and did so not only through analysis based on their immediate experiences but based on ongoing transnational dialogue. "Why do some of us feel that we can condemn prostitutes?" was exactly the question which sex worker groups asked and refuted through their formulations of new ways to construct sex work and sexuality. The focus of this thesis is unpicking how sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France constructed the sex worker, sexuality and, the role that transnationality played within this between 1973 and 1990.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW + THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The chapter aims to outline how I will build from, or challenge existing scholarship relating to my thesis and define the specific lens through which I am studying sex worker activism in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s. Within section 1.1, the literature review, I will review three fields of scholarly work: (1) literature concerning the 1970s and 1980s sex worker activism in Britain, the US and France; (2) literature on the debates around sex, pornography, prostitution, and trafficking within the women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s; and (3) literature on transnational sex worker activism. My thesis hopes to contribute to each of these fields. In section 1.2, I will outline the theoretical frameworks of this thesis. The theoretical framework I will outline is that of sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge. The conceptual framework I will incorporate is that of the "prostitute imaginary", a term introduced in 2014 by present-day sex worker activist Melissa Gira Grant.[33]

1.1: Literature Review

1.1.1: Literature Concerning Sex Worker Activism in the US, Britain and France in the 1970s and 1980s:

In this section, I will review scholarly contributions to the field of sex worker activism in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s to demonstrate the patterns of academic approach to

[33] Melissa Gira Grant, *Playing the Whore: The Work Sex Work* (London: Verso, 2014).

this field. The main contributors to this field have been both sociologists and historians though these fields and works have significant overlap. I will present these works in chronological order.

Valerie Jenness published "From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganisation of Prostitution as a Social Problem" in 1990.[34] Jenness analysed historical documents produced by Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) and interviews of COYOTE members Margo St James and Priscilla Alexander.[35] "From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work" argued that COYOTE challenged understandings of prostitution by framing it as work and as a civil rights issue.[36] This article was significant in highlighting that COYOTE's arguments were used in an attempt to "sever the social problem of prostitution from its historical association with sin, criminality and illicit sex".[37] I build from Jenness' conclusions that COYOTE placed "prostitution firmly in the discourse of work" by considering the specific discourses of labour sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France utilised. Further, I consider the significance of COYOTE's "national and international crusade", which Jenness identified, building from postcolonial feminists' analysis of some western feminist work and the debates around trafficking.[38]

Ronald Weitzer's 1991 article "Prostitutes' Rights in the United States: The Failure of a Movement" analysed the activism of COYOTE by summarising its "claims and goals" and evaluating its success. Weitzer concluded that COYOTE largely failed to "alter public opinion" and had not "won major concessions or lasting acceptance from authorities". Weitzer argued this failure was due to the "material and organizational variables" which structured COYOTE.[39]

[34] Valerie Jenness, 'From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem', *Social Problems* 37, no. 3 (August 1990): 403–20, https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1990.37.3.03a00090.
[35] Ibid, 404.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid, 417.
[38] Ibid, 409.
[39] Ronald Weitzer, 'Prostitutes' Rights in the United States: The Failure of a Movement', *The Sociological Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1991): 36

Similarly, Lilian Mathieu's 2001 article "An Unlikely Mobilization: The Occupation of Saint-Nizier Church by the Prostitutes of Lyon" surveys the conditions of the 1975 occupation of Saint-Nizier church in Lyon.[40] As with Weitzer's work, Mathieu considered the resources available to sex worker activists, both in terms of support networks available and the organisational strength and stability within the movement. Mathieu, also, deemed this example of sex worker activism a failure. This work is especially useful in detailing aspects of the occupation of Saint-Nizier Church which did not appear within my source base.

Histories of sex worker activism have flourished especially over the last decade. Melinda Chateauvert's 2014 book *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* focused on the history of sex worker activism within the US from the 1970s to the present day.[41] Chateauvert argued that sex workers have been marginalised within histories of gay liberation and feminist activism and detailed sex worker activists' contribution to feminism through questioning carceral politics and assumptions about gender, work, poverty, and violence. In relation to this thesis, Chateauvert's *Sex Workers Unite* is significant in drawing attention to the range of ways sex worker activists refuted their marginalisation and criminalisation. Further, *Sex Workers Unite* included an entire chapter, "My Ass is Mine" which focused exclusively on COYOTE. Within this chapter, *Sex Workers Unite* does not primarily utilise or analyse materials created or published by COYOTE but both secondary literature and newspaper articles which referred to COYOTE. Further, Chateauvert situated COYOTE as essentially the only active sex

[40] Lilian Mathieu, 'An Unlikely Mobilization: The Occupation of Saint-Nizier Church by the Prostitutes of Lyon', *Revue Française de Sociologie* 42 (2001): 107-131, https://doi.org/10.2307/3323055.
[41] Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013).

worker organisation in the US during the 1970s and 1980s. The US PROS, for example, were designated as "third wave" sex worker activists who arose in the 1990s.[42]

Judith Walkowitz analysed the activism of the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) in her 2019 article "Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in King's Cross in the 1980s".[43] Walkowitz's article centred on the ECP's occupation of the Church of the Holy Cross in 1982 (which directly drew from the FCP's 1975 occupation of Saint-Nizier) along with other debates in London over sex work.[44] Walkwowitz argued the activism of King's Cross "underscores the creative energies of left and feminist agendas operating in the Age of Thatcher and beyond".[45] Though this was not the centre of her work, Walkowitz concluded in this article that sex workers produced "alternative forms of feminist knowledge" as they provided the basis for "a defense of sex workers/decriminalization/ harm reduction strategies".[46] Building from this, my thesis utilises the framework of sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge as one of its central frameworks.

Historian Keiran Connell's 2020 article "PROS: The Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 1976-1982" analysed the activism of the Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS), a British sex worker group established in 1976 in Birmingham.[47] Connell argued that the PROS represented "the continual space for alternative political currents" within late 1970s Britain. Connell argued his findings contrasted with a typical depiction of this period in modern Britain as a "rising individualism, the fragmentation of left-wing activism and the arrival

[42] Ibid, 16.
[43] Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in King's Cross in the 1980s', *20 Century British History* 30, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 231–63, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz011.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid, 263.
[46] Ibid, 261-3.
[47] Kieran Connell, 'PROS: The Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 1976–1982', *Twentieth Century British History* 31, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 387–412, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz032.

of Thatcherism" in historical accounts.[48] Connell's analysis centred on the "regional dimension of non-governmental activism" and the extent to which Thatcher's Britain represented an "indelible fragmentation".[49] As a political history, this is significant in highlighting the regional significance of sex worker activism. Yet, Connell does not analyse the discursive contribution of the PROS or place PROS' perspectives and analysis within a broader sex worker movement.

Eurydice Aroney's 2020 article "The 1975 French Sex Workers' Revolt: A Narrative of Influence" analysed the 1975 French sex worker strike. Aroney hoped to challenge scholarly conclusions, such as Mathieu's, that "judged the strike a failure because it neither achieved law reform, nor was it able to sustain a lasting presence".[50] In contrast, Aroney evaluated the portrayals of the 1975 French sex worker strike by sex workers and sex worker organisations who argued that the strike was "the beginning of a struggle that extends over time and space".[51] Thus, Aroney concluded that the "legacy of the 1975 strike transcends any failure to achieve institutional goals".[52] Aroney positioned sex workers and sex worker activists as producers of a "counter-narrative" which challenged the academic assessment of the 1975 strike. I hope to build from Aroney's work which centres sex workers and sex worker activists as producers of knowledge.

Each of these works is valuable in detailing different contributions the study of sex worker activism can make to historical understandings of feminism, activism, and national politics. These also demonstrate two patterns within this field which I hope to challenge. The first is the analysis of singular groups or events. Though these works all refer to a broader exchange of sex worker activism they analyse groups or events largely in isolation. In contrast, I highlight that diverse sex

[48] Ibid, 412.
[49] Ibid, 392-3.
[50] Eurydice Aroney, 'The 1975 French Sex Workers' Revolt: A Narrative of Influence', *Sexualities* 23, no. 1–2 (February 2020): 64, https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460717741802.
[51] Ibid, 77.
[52] Ibid.

worker organisations formed transnational networks with one another and their theoretical contributions must be placed within ongoing dialogue over the construction of sex work. I analyse specifically the variation within sex worker activist perspectives.

Second, apart from Jenness' article, these works do not focus on the discourses sex worker activists utilised to pursue sex workers' rights. The sociological works have analysed sex worker activism broadly within a success/failure dichotomy. These works analysed the extent to which sex workers achieved their stated aims of sex workers' rights. Chateauvert, Walkowitz and Connell have each argued that the activism of sex workers in the US and UK, respectively, was significant. Though they analysed the contributions of sex worker activists to understandings of sex work and broader politics around sexuality this did not include analysing the discourses of sex worker activists but, rather, the actions of each campaign. Thus, my thesis also contributes to this field by providing an analysis of the discourses sex worker activists utilised and produced.

1.1.2: Literature on the Debates around Prostitution and Sexuality in the 1970s- and 1980s-Women's Movement:

There has been extensive literature on the debates around sex work, prostitution, trafficking, and pornography by women's groups in the 1970s and 1980s. In this section, I will examine patterns within this literature. First, I will look at works which refer specifically to theoretical debates around sexuality and selling sex. I will organise these works in chronological order.

Ann Ferguson's 1984 article "Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists" focused on the "increasing polarization of American feminists into two camps on issues of feminist sexual morality".[53] Ferguson situated the feminist debate between, as the title suggests, "radical" and "libertarian" feminists. Within her definitions, radical feminists contended "that

[53] Ann Ferguson, 'Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists', *Signs* 10, no. 1 (1984): 106.

sexual practices perpetuate violence against women" while libertarian feminists focused on the "potentially liberating aspects of the exchange of pleasure between consenting partners".[54] In this article, Ferguson presented and critiqued the "underlying paradigms of sexuality, social power, and sexual freedom" which evinced both "camps".[55] Ferguson acknowledged a "third perspective", a "socialist-feminist perspective", but did not develop an analysis on this perspective.[56]

Lisa Duggan and Nan Hunter's 1995 book *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, which was re-published in 2006 in a "10th Anniversary Edition", analysed the "bitter political and cultural battles over issues of sexuality [that] convulsed the nation" in the 1980s.[57] This did not centre on sex work specifically but described how debates around sex ensued in the 1980s. This work surveyed and critiqued a range of perspectives within debates over sexuality which covered topics including pornography and gay rights.

Jo Doezema considered the debates around sex trafficking in her 2005 article "Now You See Her, Now You Don't".[58] This article analysed the debates around sex trafficking over the end of the twentieth century. Doezema explored two "camps": "One lobby group framed prostitution as legitimate labour. The other considered all prostitution to be a violation of women's human rights".[59] This article is significant to my thesis as Doezema unpicked the "myth" of sex trafficking. Doezema argued that trafficking was both a "myth of distortion" in masking the reality

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid, 108.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, 10th anniversary ed (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.
[58] Jo Doezema, 'Now You See Her, Now You Don't: Sex Workers at the UN Trafficking Protocol Negotiation', *Social & Legal Studies* 14, no. 1 (March 2005): 61–89, https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663905049526.
[59] Ibid, 61.

of the migration of sex workers and a "myth as a metaphor" as trafficking narratives were encoded with a "fear of women's sexuality" and echoed the "myth of 'white slavery'" a century prior.[60]

Gilmore's 2010 chapter "Strange Bedfellows: Building Feminist Coalitions around Sex Work in the 1970s" in Nancy Hewitt's *No Permanent Waves* analysed coalitions between grassroots women's groups and sex workers' rights groups in the 1970s US.[61] Gilmore's hoped to "push beyond the dichotomies of antisex and prosex feminists and into the histories of these overlapping identities".[62] Gilmore focused on grassroots chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and argued these often supported calls for the decriminalisation of sex work. Within this thesis, I incorporate Gilmore's conclusions that sex workers and feminists "are not mutually exclusive categories".[63] As Gilmore demonstrated, sex worker activism does not need to be seen as a fringe contributor to feminist thought around selling sex but as a central one.

Except for Gilmore, these works analysed the debates around sex work within two oppositional camps: radical/libertarian; anticensorship/censorship; abolitionist/sex work lobbies; neo-abolitionist/sex worker rights advocates. Through various denominations, the "camps" of these debates are situated around the question of whether sex work is violence or a form of labour (or pro/anti sex work). Though I acknowledge the pertinence of anti-sex work perspectives within sex worker activism, I hope to shift the focus of this debate. I take at the centre of this thesis groups which all are "pro sex work", all of whom acknowledge sex work as work and aim to decriminalise selling sex and related activities. By doing so, I hope to consider a different set of debates around

[60] Ibid, 64.
[61] Stephanie Gilmore, '11. Strange Bedfellows: Building Feminist Coalitions around Sex Work in the 1970s', in *No Permanent Waves*, by Nancy A. Hewitt, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Rutgers University Press, 2019), 246–72, https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813549170-013.
[62] Ibid, 266.
[63] Ibid.

sex work which incorporate different theories of labour, exploitation, trafficking, and the broad political and economic backdrop.

1.1.3: Literature on Transnational Sex Worker Activism:

Scholars whose work analyses transnational aspects of sex worker activism overwhelmingly focus on the Global South. Kempadoo and Doezema's 1998 *Global Sex Workers* explored "the politics of a worldwide sex workers movement" and aimed to "cast some light on knowledges, actions and transformations that pertain to sex work on a global scale".[64] *Global Sex Workers* is a collection of twenty-four essays which analyse sex worker activism in many different countries and continents. This book was the first example of analysing sex workers' rights within a transnational framework. Further, Kempadoo and Doezema called for recognition of the centrality of transnational sex work to any constructions of sex work. In the introduction, Kempadoo highlighted that "sex work across national boundaries is not new to the world".[65] Kempadoo argued transnational sex work was significant, especially in debates around "trafficking" which had become intertwined with many theoretical approaches to sex work more broadly from the 1980s.[66]

Brennan analysed the sex worker rights activism in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 2010s.[67] Through a transnational approach, Brennan highlighted that sex worker activists have "called for policies that decriminalize sex work and disentangle sex work from trafficking".[68] Brennan placed both unorganised sex workers and formal sex worker activists in his analysis of

[64] Kamala Kempadoo, 'Introduction: Globalizing Sex Workers' Rights', in *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*, ed. Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (New York: Routledge, 1998).
[65] Ibid, 14.
[66] Ibid, 29.
[67] Brennan, 'THIRTEEN. Sex Worker Activism and Labor'.
[68] Ibid, 250.

sex workers' resistance. Similarly, Koné's article analysed the Latin American sex worker organisation RedTraSex which emerged in 1997. Koné argued that transnational networks enabled activists "to cultivate solidarity, develop a more unified struggle, and nurture support from the local community", ultimately "affirming the power of the transnational".[69]

These works highlight that transnational networks have been essential for activists to identify and reject "the backdrop of dangers that sex workers the world over face daily: criminalization, violence, rape, incarceration, and discrimination".[70] These works also highlight the importance of transnationality within the study of sex worker activism as it "affirms a larger transnational political space" and allowed member organisations to "cultivate solidarity, develop a more unified struggle, and nurture support from the local community".[71] Within this thesis, I will incorporate an approach to sex worker activism which traces the links, differences and similarities between activism in different groups and which centres on transnationality as crucial in furthering the movement. Thus, I follow from each of these works and hope to bring this approach to the Global North.

Further, works within this field highlight the significance of debates around trafficking and selling sex within sex worker activism. Within the introduction to *Global Sex Workers*, Kempadoo highlighted that neo-colonialism was "evinced in much recent feminist and pro-sex worker writings that have come out of the United States and Western Europe".[72] Within the context of the Global South, scholars have adopted a transnational approach as they argue that the construction of sex work is reliant on transnational formulations of selling sex. Indeed, Koné argued that historical discourses around selling sex in the Global South have placed "sex workers as trafficking

[69] Koné, 'Transnational Sex Worker Organizing in Latin America: RedTraSex, Labour and Human Rights': 91.
[70] Brennan, 'THIRTEEN. Sex Worker Activism and Labor', 240.
[71] Koné, 'Transnational Sex Worker Organizing in Latin America: RedTraSex, Labour and Human Rights': 91.
[72] Kempadoo, 'Introduction: Globalizing Sex Workers' Rights', 11.

victims that need to be protected".[73] This thesis builds from these conclusions and analyses the significance of the concept of sex trafficking to sex worker activism transnationally and sex worker activism.

1.2: Theoretical Framework + Conceptual Framework

I will use the theoretical frameworks of understanding sex workers as producers of knowledge as a lens through which to analyse my source base. Further, I will use the conceptual framework of Melissa Gira Grant's "Prostitute Imaginary". These are crucial to foregrounding this thesis as a work which places sex worker activist groups at the centre to analyse their contribution to feminist knowledge on selling sex and sexuality.

1.2.1: Sex Workers as Producers of Feminist Knowledge

The first theoretical framework I will be using is sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge. This framework incorporates feminist standpoint theory which I will first outline, before relating this to the study of sex work and sex worker activism specifically.

As gender studies scholar Brooke Meredith Beloso has argued, a central tenet of feminist theory is standpoint epistemology.[74] This framework emerged during the 1970s and 1980s as feminists questioned "the conventional social sciences, which reflected the male values, knowledges, and experience".[75] Feminist standpoint epistemology, a theory of knowledge building and a methodology, "requires us to place women at the centre of the research process".[76] Feminist

[73] Koné, 'Transnational Sex Worker Organizing in Latin America: RedTraSex, Labour and Human Rights': 89.
[74] Brooke Meredith Beloso, 'Sex, Work, and the Feminist Erasure of Class', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 1 (September 2012): 65, https://doi.org/10.1086/665808.
[75] Lina Gurung, 'Feminist Standpoint Theory: Conceptualization and Utility', *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 14 (30 December 2020): 106, https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v14i0.27357.
[76] Abigail Brooks, 'Feminist Standpoint Epistemology: Building Knowledge and Empowerment Through Women's Lived Experience', in *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*, ed. Sharlene Hesse Biber and Patricia Lena Leavy (London: Sage Publications Inc, 2007).

standpoint theory argues that individuals at the centre of a specific topic have an "epistemic advantage" through their own experiences and understandings (or "situated knowledge").[77]

Criminologists Laura Connelly and Teela Sanders have argued that feminist standpoint theory is especially pertinent within sex work scholarship as this represents a group "who are often faced with attempts to silence them".[78] Within the context of this thesis, interpreting sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge is a central aspect of my theoretical framework. Through this theoretical framework, I acknowledge that sex worker activists' materials provide valuable feminist knowledge and theory to approach both selling sex and sexuality.

Connelly and Sanders also posit that sex workers' rights academics' work should be "*in service* to this [sex workers' rights] movement", and this requires centring sex worker voices.[79] Within this thesis, I focus on the works of sex worker activists and evaluate their discursive significance. My approach, therefore, incorporates Beloso's perspective that feminist perspectives on selling sex must take seriously "sex workers' choices and visions of liberation".[80] Thus, this thesis utilises this understanding of feminist knowledge production and repositions debates around selling sex to hold those with experience at its centre.

1.2.2: The "Prostitute Imaginary"

In 2014 Melissa Gira Grant, a journalist and former sex worker, introduced the concept of the "Prostitute Imaginary" in her book *Playing the Whore*.[81] The "prostitute imaginary" encapsulates

[77] Gurung, 'Feminist Standpoint Theory', 106.
[78] Laura Connelly and Teela Sanders, 'Disrupting the Boundaries of the Academe: Co-Creating Knowledge and Sex Work "Academic-Activism"', in *The Emerald Handbook of Feminism, Criminology and Social Change*, ed. Sandra Walklate et al. (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020), 209, https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78769-955-720201018.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Brooke Meredith Beloso, 'Sex, Work, and the Feminist Erasure of Class', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 1 (September 2012): 65, https://doi.org/10.1086/665808.
[81] Grant, *Playing the Whore*.

"the ways in which we conceptualize and make arguments about prostitution".[82] Through the concept of the "prostitute imaginary", Gira Grant described the process of discursively constructing "a prostitute where before there had been only a woman".[83] Gira Grant stated that the prostitute imaginary concomitantly "compels those who seek to control, abolish or otherwise profit from prostitution, and is also the rhetorical product of their efforts".[84] Thus, it is the discursive construction around selling sex that is both produced by and causes the policing of sex work by both who are not sex workers. I utilise Gira Grant's concept to consider how sex worker activists challenged the "prostitute imaginary" as they critiqued both the construction of "the prostitute" and the wholly interrelated policing of sex work. I use the prostitute imaginary as a conceptual framework as it acknowledges "the prostitute" as produced through and by associations of particular behaviours and traits beyond selling sex which are gendered, racialised and classed. Gira Grant argued the prostitute imaginary was also represented through depictions of sex workers as victims and fuelled "the antiprostitution rescue industry" through which "sex workers are limited to performing as stock characters in a story they are not otherwise a part of".[85] Thus, within this thesis, I situate feminist individuals and groups that sought to abolish sex work also as agents that perpetuate the "prostitute imaginary". In Chapter Two, I will consider the "prostitute imaginary" as it was reflected and perpetuated both within legislation and by so-called radical feminists.

Adopting the conceptual framework of the "prostitute imaginary" works in conjunction with my first theoretical framework which upends the "prostitute imaginary" by framing sex workers as fundamentally rational actors and producers of feminist knowledge. Indeed, by challenging the

[82] Ibid, 4.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid, 104.

"prostitute imaginary", sex worker activists introduced new ways to consider selling sex and the individuals who sold sex.

Conclusion:

In the first part of this chapter, I reviewed existing literature in three significant fields which relate to my thesis. Within this, I identified patterns within these works which I hope to incorporate or challenge. Within these three fields, there are methodological opportunities for new ways to approach sex worker activism in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s. Specifically, within this thesis, I aim to tease out the discursive differences in debates around selling sex between groups that argued for sex workers' rights. Further, I argue that this activism is better understood through a transnational lens. In the last part of this chapter, I introduced the theoretical framework and conceptual framework which shape my thesis: sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge and the "prostitute imaginary". These frameworks allow my sources and materials to be situated within a perspective that acknowledges sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge and through which I understand the significance of the construction of "the prostitute" as well as organised sex workers' challenging of this construction.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUALISING SEX WORKER ACTIVISM

This chapter will provide contextualisation for the analysis of this thesis. Discourses around "the prostitute" have consistently been embedded with, and propagators of, specific understandings of race, gender, sexuality, and class.[86] These are both reflected in and built through the legislation which has surrounded sex work. Further, during the 1970s and 1980s, sex work was also fiercely debated within the context of the so-called second wave of feminist activism.

In section 2.1, I will give a brief overview of the history of legislative frameworks around sex work in the US, Britain, and France. In section 2.2, I will detail how sex work was constructed and theorised from different feminist perspectives in the 1970s and 1980s. In section 2.3, I will give an overview of the largest and most active sex worker activist groups which formed in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s. These are the groups on which this thesis centres on.

2.1: Legislation

The USA:

In the US, legislation around and concerning sex work is largely the result of state laws. Laws which established criminal prosecutions for sex work emerged in the US in the 1810s. Despite this, laws were rarely enforced, and sex work was, therefore, semi-tolerated in many areas and relatively public.[87] By the early twentieth century, however, segregated sex districts were no longer tacitly accepted.[88] "Anti-vice" campaigns and so-called "white slave" crusades meant that

[86] Terry G. Lilley, Chrysanthi S. Leon, and Anne E. Bowler, 'The Same Old Arguments', *Social Justice* 46, no. 4 (158) (2019): 31–52.
[87] Jessica Pliley, 'Prostitution in America', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, by Jessica Pliley (Oxford University Press, 2018), 7, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.121.
[88] Neil L. Shumsky, 'Tacit Acceptance: Respectable Americans and Segregated Prostitution, 1870–1910', in *Prostitution*, ed. Nancy F. Cott (DE GRUYTER SAUR, 1993), 666, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110976366.326.

legislation around sex work was more rigidly enforced and segregated sex districts were abolished by the 1920s. White slavery campaigns involved the construction of a narrative in which predominantly white women were forced to engage in the sex industry by non-white men.[89] The construction of a racialised-gender hierarchy which depicted white women as innocent victims, and offered little legal protection for non-white women was reflected within and reinforced by these. On the one hand, these campaigns targeted and worked to limit immigration. Legislation which was enacted around the turn of the century consistently outlawed the immigration of people who engaged in the sex industry. Notable examples include the 1903 Immigration Law which barred procurers (pimps) or prostitutes and the 1910 White Slave Traffic Act which made it illegal to transport women across US state borders for the purpose of "prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose".[90] On the other hand, the attempt to shift discourses of slavery to focus on white women and their need for protection served to erase African-American slavery *and* continued to construct whiteness as innocence and non-whiteness, especially Blackness, as violent and threatening within the US through sex worker legislation.[91]

In the US, from the 1920s, the heightened panic around sex work and especially the narrative of white slavery lessened, but sex work continued to operate in a more clandestine manner. As opposed to the previous sex industry areas and brothels, sex work largely operated within massage parlours, as independent workers at bars and hotels, and street workers. During the Second World War, legislation was introduced around sex work that related to anxieties over the spread of venereal disease which might impact soldiers. This included the May Act of 1941 which

[89] Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 13.
[90] Pliley, 'Prostitution in America', 17.
[91] Pliley, 'Prostitution in America', 17.

established the quarantine of 'infected' sex workers. Through this, any woman suspected of carrying a venereal disease could be arrested. From the 1950s especially, anti-prostitution laws became stricter and more rigidly enforced.[92] Gender historian Jessica Pliley has argued this was part of postwar sexual politics in which the sex worker was especially vilified as a threat to the nuclear family and traditional gender roles.[93]

In 1971, an ordinance allowed for licensed brothels and prostitutes in the state of Nevada. Elsewhere, prostitution continued to be prohibited, though, laws were inconsistently enforced. This legal system was built on the assumption of "prostitution as immoral" and as such "aims at its eradication".[94] Thus, in all states except Nevada, sex work was banned *per se*. Involvement or suspected of involvement with sex work, including those deemed to be profiting off a woman's financial gain from sex work, was illegal. This included, for example, pimps or brothel-keepers. Customers were also technically subject to arrest, as solicitation was a crime for both customers and sex workers, yet arrests of customers were uncommon, something which sex worker activists drew attention to.[95] In the contextualisation of sex worker activism in the US, it is, therefore, important to acknowledge that "the prostitute" as it was embedded and reinforced through legislation was implicitly gendered and racialised.

France:

As with the US, legislation over sex work in France was specifically tied to concerns over race, immigration and gender. From 1802, sex work was broadly framed as a "necessary evil" and a

[92] Fred Leonhardt, 'Prostitution - Alternatives to Prohibition', Research Monograph (United States: National Institute of Justice, 1981), 11.
[93] Pliley, 'Prostitution in America'.
[94] Jean D'Cunha, 'Prostitution Laws: Ideological Dimensions and Enforcement Practices', *Economic and Political Weekly* 27, no. 17 (1992): WS-34.
[95] Jenness, 'From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work', 408.

regulationist approach was taken. This allowed for legal sexual commerce with strict regulations controlled by *brigade des moeurs* (vice quads) which ensured there was a system of state control of prostitution.[96] This included compulsory registrations, health checks and police controls for those who sold sex, and licensed brothels within which sex workers could work. On the one hand, this was intended to limit the spread of alleged 'immorality' and venereal diseases by clear confinement and regulation. On the other, it is important to note that the regulationist approach was used in French colonies to prevent race miscegenation.[97]

The mediatisation of the 'white slave trade', from the late nineteenth century, as well as increasing international concerns over the 'trafficking of women' from the 1930s, increased the popularity of the abolitionist movement.[98] The abolitionist movement was led by Josephine Butler in the late nineteenth century. Butler launched a 'holy crusade' in France in 1874 in which sex work was depicted as a 'social evil' which needed to be eradicated.[99] In 1946, brothels within metropolitan France were banned but compulsory registration (under a 'sanitary and social record') and health checks remained, this is seen as the start of a "new abolitionist era" within French legislation.[100]

In 1960 in France, the 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others was ratified, which further reflected an abolitionist

[96] Tiphaine Besnard, 'A Brief History of the Regulation of Prostitution in France – Feminism, Political Controversies and Social Repression', *Journal of the International Network for Sexual Ethics & Politics* 2, no. 1 (10 November 2014), 93, https://doi.org/10.3224/insep.v2i1.17065.
[97] Synnøve Økland Jahnsen and Hendrik Wagenaar, eds., *Assessing Prostitution Policies in Europe*, Interdisciplinary Studies in Sex for Sale 3 (London New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 3.
[98] Besnard, 'A Brief History of the Regulation of Prostitution in France – Feminism, Political Controversies and Social Repression', 95.
[99] Ibid, 94.
[100] Ibid, 93.

ideology.[101] This ended the requirement to register as a 'prostitute' as well as compulsory health checks and prohibited all "third-party activities" such as pimping or brothel-keeping. The ratification of the 1949 Convention has been seen as a crucial turning point in the French approach to sex work, from 'regulationlism' to 'abolitionism'. This Convention was neither signed nor ratified in the US or Britain.[102] The abolitionist politics entrenched in these legislative changes encouraged the punishment of those who forced the prostitution of others, through pimping or brothel-keeping, for example. Within this, sex workers were as 'victims', forced to engage in the sex industry, and, therefore, in need of social support. This 'social support' was intended to include the introduction of dedicated health and social services to individuals who sold sex.[103] However, few examples of social support were introduced, and the practice of informally 'registering' sex workers continued into at least the mid-1970s.[104] Indeed, as historian Sonja Dolinsek has argued, the Convention left sex work either unregulated or indirectly criminalised by penal law, and certainly, sex work was not seen as a form of *work*.[105] Police frequently "defined offences as they saw them", as pimping laws were particularly expansive.[106] The history of the legislation around sex work in France, therefore, was continually overtly concerned with disease, the morality of women's sexuality and a racial concern between immigration and trafficking.

[101] Sonja Dolinsek, 'Tensions of Abolitionism during the Negotiation of the 1949 "Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others"', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 29, no. 2 (4 March 2022): 226, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2022.2026893.
[102] Martti Lehti and Kauko Aromaa, 'Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation', *Crime and Justice* 34, no. 1 (January 2006), 169, https://doi.org/10.1086/650306.
[103] Emily St. Denny, 'The Gradual Transformation of a Weak but Enduring Regime: Contemporary French Prostitution Policy in Transition (1946–2016)', *Modern & Contemporary France* 25, no. 3 (3 July 2017): 304, https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2017.1304902.
[104] Besnard, 'A Brief History of the Regulation of Prostitution in France – Feminism, Political Controversies and Social Repression', 96.
[105] Sonja Dolinsek, 'Tensions of Abolitionism during the Negotiation of the 1949 "Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others"', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 29, no. 2 (4 March 2022): 239, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2022.2026893.
[106] Magaly Rodríguez García, Lex Heerma van Voss, and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Selling Sex in the City: A Global History of Prostitution, 1600s-2000s* (Brill, 2017), 195, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004346253.

Britain:

As with both the US and France, ideologies concerning race, sexuality, class, and gender have been embedded within and perpetuated through the legislation around sex work in Britain. In Britain, there has been consistent legislation surrounding sex work but the act of "prostitution" itself has not ever been illegal. The 1824 Vagrancy Act introduced the phrase "common prostitute" to refer to those who had been convicted of selling sex, and the phrase remained in use until 2007.[107] Once labelled a "common prostitute" this was permanent and was the title which was used within English law and within the court by police to refer to those tried for any subsequent charges. Over the course of the nineteenth century, legislation around sex work proliferated. The infamous Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, 1868 and 1869 allowed for figures of the state to "identify, inspect, and detain, if necessary, any prostitute suspected of suffering from venereal disease", from fears that these diseases might be passed to soldiers, sailors or citizens.[108] These acts embodied a system of regulation in which there was an acceptance of the inevitability of commercial sex but also attempts to contain it and implement strategies of sanitation. Overwhelmingly, the Contagious Diseases Acts involved the medical surveillance of working-class women.[109]

As with France, legislative frameworks around sex work were also informed by depictions of the prevalence of the commercial sex industry in colonies, fears over white slavery and the perceived need to prevent miscegenation.[110] Legislation at the turn of the century, such as the

[107] Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class: The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1952-2011* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), 113.
[108] Philip Howell, 'Prostitution and Racialised Sexuality: The Regulation of Prostitution in Britain and the British Empire before the Contagious Diseases Acts', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18, no. 3 (June 2000): 322, https://doi.org/10.1068/d259.
[109] Kimeya Baker, 'The Contagious Diseases Acts And The Prostitute: How Disease And The Law Controlled The Female Body', *Journal of Law and Jurisprudence*, 2013, 94, https://doi.org/10.14324/111.2052-1871.040.
[110] Howell, 'Prostitution and Racialised Sexuality', 321.

Aliens Act 1905, brought immigration restrictions which enabled significant powers of "surveillance and repatriation over foreign women suspected of prostitution".[111] Moral conjecture and legislative debates concerning sex work reemerged in the 1950s following a postwar renewed stress on the marital bond.[112] These discussions also included emphasising the threat of the racialised Other who was depicted as heavily involved in the sex industry.[113]

The 1956 Sexual Offences Act was the central piece of legislation concerning sex work in the midcentury. The act referred to many different sexual acts and related activities but involved legislation specifically around the sex industry which prohibited a "man living on earnings of prostitution" or a "woman exercising control over prostitute" with a penalty of two years. It also made it an offence to keep a brothel.[114] In 1957, the Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (more commonly known as the Wolfenden Report) was published which gave recommendations for legislative changes surrounding homosexuality and sex work. The Report was commissioned by the government and was produced by a group of fifteen middle-class individuals, three women and twelve men, with high-profile professions such as MPs, judges and doctors.[115] Unlike homosexuality which was treated by the Wolfenden Committee as a 'private' act, the report outlined that "vice and immorality" which took place in public must be prohibited.[116] Thus, this report was explicitly concerned with debates over private/ public sexualities, especially women's sexuality in public. Sex work was presented as a "public nuisance". As a direct result of the report, the Street Offences Act 1959 was passed which made it

[111] Laura Lammasniemi, 'Anti-White Slavery Legislation and Its Legacies in England', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, no. 9 (21 September 2017), 73, https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121795.
[112] Kimeya Baker, 'The Contagious Diseases Acts And The Prostitute: How Disease And The Law Controlled The Female Body', *Journal of Law and Jurisprudence*, 2013, 103, https://doi.org/10.14324/111.2052-1871.040.
[113] Baker, 'The Contagious Diseases Acts And The Prostitute', 103.
[114] Parliament of the United Kingdom, 'Sexual Offences Act', 1956 c. 69 (Regnal. 4_and_5_Eliz_2) § (1956).
[115] Brian Lewis, *Wolfenden's Witnesses* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 7 https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137321503.
[116] Day, *On the Game*, 51.

an offence for an individual "to loiter or solicit in a street or public place for the purpose of prostitution". It was not that the act of selling sex was made illegal, but that public solicitation or loitering for this purpose was. This placed broad powers with police officers who had the right to "arrest without warrant anyone he finds in a street or public place and suspects, with reasonable cause, to be committing an offence".[117] In other words, there was no evidence required to accuse or arrest an individual of "loitering" or of "soliciting". Thus, by 1970, while prostitution was technically legal, almost everything associated with it was illegal.[118] Tangibly, this severely limited the livelihoods and legal protection afforded to sex workers. Two women working together was deemed as constituting a brothel, as technically, with more than two sex workers within one premise, women could be charged with profiting from the others' work (and was, thus, illegal). Further, any man who was financially dependent on a sex worker could be arrested as a pimp.[119] As was the case in the US, France and Britain, male partners, sons or friends could be arrested and charged as pimps, while female partners could be accused of corroboration.[120] Thus, while selling sex was legal, there were severe limitations to how and where this could take place as well as who could be involved in this.

The legislative context within the US, Britain, and France in 1970 was not uniform. In the US, sex work itself was explicitly illegal in all states but one. Anyone involved in sex work, including customers, sex workers and pimps or brothel-keepers was (technically) liable to arrest. In France, selling sex itself was legal, yet, there were laws around sex work, concerning pimps or brothel-keeping which complicated how sex workers could work and how they could form

[117] Parliament of the United Kingdom, 'Street Offences Act', 7 & 8 Eliz 2 c 57 § (1959).
[118] James, *Sex, Race and Class*, 113.
[119] Graham Scambler and Annette Scambler, eds., *Rethinking Prostitution: Purchasing Sex in the 1990s* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), 81.
[120] James, *Sex, Race and Class*, 120.

relationships independent from their work. In Britain, the act of selling sex itself was not illegal, but many activities surrounding it were. This included soliciting or loitering in public as well as strict laws around pimping, brothel-keeping, and working within brothels. This severely complicated how and where sex workers could work.

There were similarities within the legislation, through which each country had explicitly and implicitly co-constructed race, class, gender, and sexuality in and through legislation around sex work. Further, such legislation had consistently been tied to concerns over sexual health which depicted those who sold sex as the chief transmitters of sexual diseases. By 1970 in the US, Britain and France, legislative debates over sex work were overtly concerned with immigration, trafficking, public health, and broader questions over women's sexuality within private/public spheres. Within this framework, aspects of selling sex were criminalised, "the prostitute" was explicitly associated with disease and sex work legislation was framed as protecting sex workers. Within and through legislation, a specific construction of "the prostitute" in the US, Britain and France was formed.

2.2: The Women's Movement and Sex Work

The "second wave" is a term used to denote the period of feminist activism between the 1960s and 1990s.[121] Broadly, these decades saw the emergence of groups and individuals who aimed to increase women's rights while they critiqued patriarchal, or male-dominated, social, cultural, and political practices. Feminist theory was developed, and groups agitated for reforms and increased rights for women. Debates around prostitution, sexuality, pornography, and sex trafficking were especially fraught during the 1970s and 1980s within the women's movement. The study of the

[121] Stephanie Gilmore, '11. Strange Bedfellows: Building Feminist Coalitions around Sex Work in the 1970s', in *No Permanent Waves*, by Nancy A. Hewitt, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Rutgers University Press, 2019), 246, https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813549170-013.

relationship between power and sexuality was at the centre of feminist debates in the 1970s and 1980s.[122] Within these debates, the exploration of sexual oppression was crucial to how many feminist thinkers explored how and why women were oppressed within a patriarchal capitalist society as well as the best way to liberate women from this oppression.

In this section, I will give a brief overview of the feminist debates around sexuality, which included sexual labour in the 1970s and 1980s. This is pertinent not only as the majority of sex worker organisations explicitly tied their activism to the women's movement but also because of how they formulated their discourses around sex work, sexuality, and labour in reference to the ongoing debates about sex work which ensued amongst feminist groups throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Precise dates are contested, but broadly in the US, the "second wave" of the women's movement is denoted as starting in the mid-1960s.[123] In Britain and France, the women's movement is depicted as emerging in the late 1960s. As scholar Gurun has argued, in the late 1960s individuals and groups in both Britain and France questioned "broader left-wing politics and ideas of 'sexual liberation" and were explicitly influenced by the American women's movement.[124] Debates in approaches to sexuality were apparent in each country and were influenced by one another.

Radical feminist approaches to sex work overwhelmingly characterised sex work as the epitome of both actual and symbolic violence against women.[125] This view was propagated by feminist scholars such as Kathleen Barry, Andrea Dworkin, and Catherine MacKinnon. The

[122] Lynn S. Chancer, 'From Pornography to Sadomasochism: Reconciling Feminist Differences', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 571 (2000): 77–88.
[123] Stephanie Gilmore, '11. Strange Bedfellows: Building Feminist Coalitions around Sex Work in the 1970s', in *No Permanent Waves*, by Nancy A. Hewitt, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Rutgers University Press, 2019), 246, https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813549170-013.
[124] Anna Gurun, 'Second-Wave Feminist Approaches to Sexuality in Britain and France, c.1970-c.1983' (PhD, University of Dundee, 2015).
[125] Kate Sutherland, 'Work, Sex, and Sex-Work: Competing Feminist Discourses on the International Sex Trade', *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 42, no. 1 (n.d.): 139–67.

"radical" perspective is seen as, broadly "anti sex work". This perspective is centred on how the over-sexualisation of women was symbolised and perpetuated through both sex work and pornography which legitimated and encouraged violence against women.[126] International relations scholar Valadier has noted that radical feminists argued that by selling sex, women are "reduced to a sexual object at the disposal of men, which destroys her human dignity".[127] Within this line of thought, both sex work and sex trafficking are a form of violence and slavery against women regardless of whether a woman argued she consented.[128] This group, also known as abolitionists, utilised the framework of human rights to advocate for the abolition of sex work as it represented a violation of women's rights.[129] Radical feminists advocated that sex work is represented as a form of sexual exploitation akin to rape, genital mutilation or incest.[130] Furthermore, this radical feminist perspective accentuated the concept of sex trafficking and depicted migrant sex workers as "poor and naive women" who were "in need of help to be rescued from slavery".[131] Discourses of moralisation and victimisation around sex work were at the centre of this perspective.

Liberal feminist approaches are often posited as the contrasting perspective to radical feminism. Indeed, these are often depicted within a dichotomy, such as in the work of criminologist Laura Connelly.[132] Liberal feminists argued that most sex workers sell sex through their own agency.[133] The association with "liberalism" is based on the understanding that human beings are

[126] Lara Gerassi, 'A Heated Debate: Theoretical Perspectives of Sexual Exploitation and Sex Work', *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 42, no. 4 (December 2015): 82.
[127] Charlotte Valadier, 'Migration and Sex Work through a Gender Perspective', *Contexto Internacional* 40, no. 3 (December 2018): 506, https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-8529.2018400300005.
[128] Ibid, 503.
[129] Ibid, 505.
[130] Ibid, 506.
[131] Ibid, 507.
[132] Laura Connelly, 'Debates on Prostitution: An Introduction to Feminist Politics and Their Influence Upon International Policy and Practice', in *Prostitution: A Companion of Mankind*, ed. Frank Jacob (Peter Lang D, 2016), 61, https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-03142-3.
[133] Ibid.

rational agents and that, thus, individuals can make their own decisions. Thus, the liberal perspective contrasted with the "victimising" discourses of radical feminists. Specifically, they argued that a radical perspective denied the agency of women and that the criminal legal frameworks around sex work worked to subordinate women.[134] Furthermore, this integrated an understanding of the freedoms of individuals which included the rights to freedom of occupation and privacy which should place limits on the powers of government to intervene in peoples' lives. Within this analysis, selling sex was framed as a legitimate form of employment and should be understood in the same way as any other mainstream business.[135] This approach also adopted a capitalist perspective of work which advocated for sex workers to be recognised as "free workers".[136] Liberal feminists advocated for either legalised or decriminalised models of regulation.

Socialist feminists argued that sex work was "caused by capitalism and patriarchy".[137] They argued that selling sex was work, and, thus, that it was exploitative of women both as part of a wage labour class and as a gender.[138] They hoped to "destigmatize the sale of sex as no better or worse than other forms of women's intimate labour".[139] Thus their analysis ensured one "need not treat sex work as a special, and more egregious, case of capitalist exploitation- despite our own

[134] Charlotte Valadier, 'Migration and Sex Work through a Gender Perspective', *Contexto Internacional* 40, no. 3 (December 2018): 508, https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-8529.2018400300005.
[135] Connelly, 'Debates on Prostitution: An Introduction to Feminist Politics and Their Influence Upon International Policy and Practice', 61..
[136] Cynthia Cole Robinson, 'CHAPTER TWO: Feminist Theory and Prostitution', *Counterpoints* 302 (2007): 28.
[137] Laurie Shrage, 'Comment on Overall's "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work"', *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 564.
[138] Michael Musheno and Kathryn Seeley, 'Prostitution Policy and the Women's Movement: Historical Analysis of Feminist Thought and Organization', *Contemporary Crises* 10, no. 3 (1987): 244, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00729120.
[139] Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in King's Cross in the 1980s', *20 Century British History* 30, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 242, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz011.

cultural sensibilities".[140] In this view, sex work should be decriminalised and sex workers have access to labour rights yet, this is subsumed within a vision for sexism and capitalism to be ultimately overthrown.[141]

Within the American context, the debates between feminist perspectives on sex have been termed the "feminist sex wars" which highlights the deeply polarised nature of debates around sexuality. As highlighted within the literature review, these "sex wars" often posited radical and liberal American feminists as a dichotomous approach to sex work. Within the US, especially, the debates around sexuality and sex work were acute.

While it was less prolific than within the US, different feminist groups within France debated and articulated different perspectives on sex work during the 1970s and 1980s. Radical feminist perspectives, for example, were reflected in the works of Annie Mignard, a feminist scholar, who argued that the existence of prostitution reflected male domination and depicted women who sold sex as victims.[142] Sociologist Lilian Mathieu argued that Mignard's understanding of prostitution as a "form of sexual violence against women" dominated French feminist understandings of sex work until the 1990s. Mathiew has also noted that in the mid-1980s debates around sexuality and pornography emerged which represented a "feeble echo in France of the lively debate in the United States".[143] Within this, the perspectives of "radical and libertarian feminists" were reflected in respective understandings of female sexuality, censorship and pornography and prostitution as a form of liberation.[144] Socialist feminist perspectives were also very much reflected in France in

[140] Laurie Shrage, 'Comment on Overall's "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work"', *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 569.
[141] Musheno and Seeley, 'Prostitution Policy and the Women's Movement': 242.
[142] Lilian Mathieu, 'Prostituées et Féministes En 1975 et 2002 : L'impossible Reconduction d'une Alliance:', *Travail, Genre et Sociétés* N° 10, no. 2 (1 November 2003): 43, https://doi.org/10.3917/tgs.010.0031.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid, 44.

the 1970s and 1980s in the analysis of groups such as the French Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) who situated sex work as the product of capitalist patriarchy within their journal Cahiers du feminisme.[145]

Within Britain, historian Judith Walkowitz has argued that sex work was "low on the agenda of women's liberation" in the early 1970s.[146] Walkowitz argued that this changed following the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979, sex workers' rights activists, the infamous serial killer "The Yorkshire Ripper" and "municipal feminism and new forms of second-wave feminist activism".[147] Following this, prostitution "resurfaced as the object of feminist politics".[148] Both socialist and liberal feminist thought emerged and condemned the vilification of "the prostitute" within legislation and by the police. Further, radical feminist thought was reflected from 1980 onwards by some feminist thinkers who adopted "an explicit abolitionist position towards prostitution" and "denounced the sex trade as sexual slavery, a symptom, even a causative agent, of male violence".[149] This included feminist writers such as Sheila Jeffreys and Julie Bindel.

While the extent of polarisation on debates around sexuality was not equal within the US, Britain and France, the debates themselves were of pertinence in each of these countries in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Further, it is significant to note the transnational element of feminist thought which influenced how feminist thinkers in each of these countries developed their theoretical perspectives on women's oppression, sexuality and, specifically, sex work. Within each country, there was a divide in the perspective that feminist thinkers took to sex work, and these decades saw the proliferation of publications which related various theoretical and legal

[145] Ibid.
[146] Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in King's Cross in the 1980s', *20 Century British History* 30, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 231, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz011.
[147] Ibid, 233.
[148] Ibid, 231.
[149] Ibid, 241.

frameworks of sex work. Sex worker activist groups were creating theoretical perspectives of sex work and advocating for sex workers' rights within this context and were also contributors to this context. These groups were aligned within and contributors to these perspectives on sex work.

2.3: Sex Worker Activist Groups:

While the legislation itself was different in each of these countries there were many similarities in how sex workers criticised existing legislation and how it was enforced. Sex worker activist groups were unsatisfied with the existing legislation and argued for the removal of legislation which negatively impacted their right to work and advocated for the introduction of labour laws to protect their working conditions, safety, and rights. This section will detail the main sex worker activist groups in the US, France, and Britain in the 1970s and 1980s in chronological order.

The US:

In the US, the first formal sex worker activist group was called Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE). This was established in San Francisco in 1973 by ex-sex worker Margo St James, following her involvement in other women's groups.[150] The purpose was to highlight the violence against sex workers, provide resource information for legal defence, health, and employment to those who sold sex, and to challenge the social stigma around sex work. COYOTE explicitly framed the liberation of sex workers as tied to women's sexual liberation and promoted sex workers' rights.[151] Priscilla Alexander, a principal member of COYOTE, claimed in 1987 that the "overwhelming majority of COYOTE's active members are prostitutes and ex-prostitutes".[152] The

[150] Frédérique Delacoste, ed., *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (London: Virago, 1988), 291.
[151] Sheila Jeffreys, *The Idea of Prostitution*, Reprinted (North Melbourne, Vic: Spinifex Press, 2008), 72.
[152] Delacoste, *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, 17.

analysis of COYOTE in relation to sex work broadly is subsumed within the "liberal" approach to sex work described in section 2.2.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, sister chapters across the US sprung up in many states and were involved in local activism.[153] While these were not subsumed within COYOTE, they broadly supported the political aims and framing that COYOTE purported. By 1975, there were sister chapters in Seattle, New York, Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Diego and Mexico City and there were at least twenty COYOTE chapters by 1980.[154] Notable organisations included the Prostitutes of New York (PONY), Hooking is Real Employment (HIRE) based in Atlanta, and the Association of Seattle Prostitutes (ASP).

While COYOTE was the most prominent sex worker organisation in the US during this period, sex worker activist groups independent of COYOTE were also formed in the 1970s and 1980s. The US PROStitutes Collective (US PROS), an affiliate chapter of the International Wages for Housework Campaign and a sister branch of the French Collective of Prostitutes and English Collective of Prostitutes (see further below), was established in 1976. The Wages for Housework Campaign was a global feminist campaign that sought to broaden the focus and inclusion of feminism, supporting all workers, including sex workers.[155] The Campaign promoted socialist feminism. They argued that women's work should be recognised and economically compensated for and centred on class liberation as intrinsic to women's liberation. The Campaign understood sex work as primarily a class issue. Their position on sex work, which was upheld by the US PROS, the ECP and the FCP was that "Prostitution is one way of getting our wages. Although the

[153] Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 5.
[154] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'Untitled', June 1975, 81-M32--90-M1-26, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[155] Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in King's Cross in the 1980s', *20 Century British History* 30, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 9, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz011.

government tries to isolate our struggles, we refuse to be divided. All work is prostitution and we are all prostitutes".[156] The US PROS had chapters in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York. Between 1976 and 1980 the US PROS worked cooperatively with Margo St James and COYOTE.

In 1977 the National Task Force on Prostitution (NTFP) was formed "to collect and disseminate information about prostitutes" in the US.[157] In 1979, Margo St James became the Executive Director of the NTFP. Once the NTFP had been established COYOTE became less active. The NTFP became a "parent organisation" to COYOTE branches and acted as "a coalition of prostitutes' rights organisations" in the US.[158] The last publication of "COYOTE Howls", the COYOTE newsletter, in 1979, concluded that "This may be the last issue of COYOTE HOWLS as you know it. The campaign for the national decriminalization of prostitution will be taken on by the newly formed National Task Force on Prostitution".[159]

France:

Formal, group-based, activism started in France in 1973. A sex worker, Jacqueline Trappler, established the group Les Petites Soeurs des Coeurs which advocated for the creation of 'Eros Centres', as a form of legalised sex work. In April 1975, a group of sex workers met in Lyon and discussed issues they were facing. This was in response to police harassment, as well as inadequate police response to several murders of sex workers in Lyon which had taken place in the preceding years.[160] This group attempted to gain the support and notice of various members of the state,

[156] San Francisco and Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee and Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'An Attack on Prostitutes Is an Attack on All Women, COYOTE HOWLS, Volumer 4, Number 1', 1977, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[157] Margo St James, 'TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE ON PORNOGRAPHY.', 31 March 1985, 81-M32--90-M1-31, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[158] National Task Force on Prostitution, 'Membership Form for the National Task Force on Prostitution', 1986, 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[159] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 6, Number 1', 1979, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[160] Claude Jaget, *Prostitutes, Our Life* (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 12.

including the Home Office minister and the Minister of Labour, but they received little response. Supported by an abolitionist feminist group, Mouvement du Nid, on 2 June 1975, 100-150 sex workers occupied St Nizier Church in Lyon and put forward their demands to improve their safety and livelihood. The Mouvement du Nid was a Christianity-inspired movement that was specifically and exclusively concerned with sex work. The Nid supported abolitionism but had a history of providing support and assistance to sex workers in France through, for example, legal services.[161] The occupation of churches spread across France, with cases in Marseilles, Grenoble, Montpellier, Toulouse, Cannes and Paris. This has since become known as the "National Hookers' Strike".[162] The French Collective of Prostitutes (FCP) was formed in 1975 as a result of these occupations. The materials of the FCP have not been archived, so it is hard to know the specifics of their campaign or work. By 1980, the FCP was largely inactive, though individuals and small clusters of French sex workers continued to organise.[163] French sex workers continued to attend sex worker conferences throughout the 1980s, but this was not through a formal group.

In the later 1970s and early 1980s, Grisélidis Réal was a prominent sex worker activist who organised in France. Though Réal did not organise a formal sex worker activist group during this period, her activism nonetheless remains significant to French sex worker activism.

Britain:

In Britain, there were three active formal organisations of sex workers in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975, several sex workers in England met "having heard about the French strike" and were

[161] Lilian Mathieu, 'An Unlikely Mobilization: The Occupation of Saint-Nizier Church by the Prostitutes of Lyon', *Revue Française de Sociologie* 42 (2001): 113-4 , https://doi.org/10.2307/3323055.
[162] International Wages for Housework Campaign and English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Against Legalization- For Abolition', February 1982, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[163] Margo St James, 'Letter from "Margo, Jennifer, et Al".', 5 March 1981, 81-M32--90-M1-546, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

"determined to do something about our situation".[164] They appealed to the already existing Wages for Housework Campaign, which supported these sex workers in their demand for the "abolition of the laws against prostitution". Initially known as the 'Power of Collective Women', the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) was formed in 1975 as an organisation that was part of the International Wages for Housework Campaign (alongside the FCP and the US PROS). The ECP was comprised of both sex workers and non-sex workers but had a policy of non-disclosure to protect its members; while they acknowledged that both non-sex workers and sex workers were represented, the group's policy did not require that individuals revealed their status.[165] Their analysis of the sex industry was situated within their broader critique of systems of capitalist exploitation, especially in how these were gendered and racialised. The ECP, however, was one of the few sex worker activist groups that held this at the centre of their activism. In self-descriptions, the ECP argued they were "prostitutes from all levels of the sex industry: Black and white, immigrant and British".[166] The ECP argued that racial hierarchies were co-constructed within and by legislation and the policing of sex work. The ECP is still active today and arguing for the decriminalisation of sex work.

Another prominent group which was established was the Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS) (which had no relation to the US PROS). The PROS was founded in Birmingham, UK in November 1976, with its membership comprised of sex workers, social workers, lawyers, MPs, and magistrates. Supporter groups emerged in London, Sheffield, Manchester, Cardiff, and Bristol. PROS was run as a collective with a revolving chairmanship, which met fortnightly and published a periodic bulletin. This organisation was slightly different to

[164] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Introduction: On The Game and On The Move', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 24.
[165] Pheterson, *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores*, 37.
[166] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Who Are the ECP?', n.d., ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

the other British groups, in that it focused specifically, as its name suggests, on "abolishing imprisonment for offences of soliciting and loitering", as well as abolishing the term "common prostitute" from English laws. They were a reform-based group that targeted specific pieces of legislation relating to sex work, as opposed to challenging the entirety of legislation around sex work, or, indeed, how negative discourses of sex work were co-constructed within this. The PROS was active until 1982.[167]

In 1975 also, a British woman Helen Buckingham founded the Prostitutes United for Social and Sexual Independence (PUSSI), which changed its name in 1977 to Prostitutes Laws Are Nonsense (PLAN). The records of PLAN are not archived, but their activism is recorded through other organisations. This is especially the case as Helen Buckingham and PLAN's spokespeople frequently submitted articles and were published within the newsletters of other sex worker groups, including the ECP, COYOTE, NTFP and PROS, such as an article titled 'PLAN: Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense' in a 1977 COYOTE newsletter.[168]

International Groups:

In 1985, at the First World Whores' Congress in Amsterdam, an explicitly international sex workers' activist group was set up called the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR). This group included sex workers, ex-sex workers and supporters. The ICPR was led by Margo St James and sociologist Gail Pheterson from the Netherlands, both COYOTE members, and had a total of seventy-five individuals from six European countries, three south-east Asian

[167] Kieran Connell, 'PROS: The Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 1976–1982', *Twentieth Century British History* 31, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 387–412, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz032.
[168] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 4, Number 2', Autumn 1977, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

countries, the US and Canada.[169] From this list alone, it is evident that this committee was dominated overwhelmingly by members from within the Global North, and that within this, Eastern Europe was not present. How the US dominated these discussions will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The International Prostitutes' Collective (IPC) was established in the early 1980s and was the network of sex worker activist groups which included the ECP, FCP and US PROS, alongside other groups such as the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective which was founded in 1987, and chapters in Canada and, Trinidad and Tobago. These groups were all affiliated with the International Wages for Housework Campaign and worked on publications, exchanged information, and organised talks together throughout the 1980s. The IPC did not specifically have a designated committee, rather it was the formalisation of the network which existed between already existing sex worker groups.

[169] Margo St James and Gail Pheterson, '$ex Workers Make History: 1985 & 1986 – The World Whores' Congress' (Report of the European Conference on Sex Work, 2005), https://www.walnet.org/csis/groups/icrse/brussels-2005/SWRights-History.pdf.

CHAPTER THREE: RECONSTRUCTING "THE PROSTITUTE"

In their third newsletter, published in July 1975, Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) detailed how they believed "the prostitute" was conceptualised: "she's unclean, she's sick, she's hostile to men, she's criminal, an unfit mother and wife".[170] Through their activism, sex worker activists critiqued this prostitute imaginary and articulated new constructions of those who sold sex. Sex worker activists broadly rejected each of the stereotypes which COYOTE articulated and attempted to rearticulate those who sold sex as legitimate workers and good mothers. In this chapter, I explore how sex worker activists refuted the construction of "the prostitute" through new discourses around selling sex. This included incorporating specific discourses of labour and motherhood into their analysis of selling sex. Further, all sex worker groups explicitly gendered the sex worker as female, and this was a fundamental aspect of their activism. Yet, the extent to which they centred how race was co-constructed within and through discourses of sex work differed. Sex worker activists' approaches to labour, sexual labour, gender, and race converged within their approach to sex trafficking. In this chapter, I explore both how sex worker activists challenged the "prostitute imaginary" and how they constructed "the sex worker" within their own analysis.

This chapter will elucidate how sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France critiqued the construction of "the prostitute" and introduced new discourses around selling sex. In section 3.1, I will analyse how sex worker activists utilised discourses of labour to legitimise and argue for a new legal framework around sex work which protected the rights of those who sold sex. Though groups incorporated different understandings of labour within their activism, each argued that selling sex was a form of work. In section 3.2, I analyse how sex worker activists utilised

[170] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'Coyote Growls, Volume 1, Number 3', July 1975, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

discourses of motherhood within their activism. Discourses of motherhood were central to how sex worker activists represented their identity and understood selling sex. In this way, I argue that refuting "the prostitute" and constructing "the sex worker" involved positioning those who sold sex as workers and mothers. In section 3.3, I explore the extent to which sex worker activist groups analysed sex work and the discrimination of sex workers through a gender-only lens. In section 3.4, I analyse how sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France defined sexual labour in relation to the concept of "sex trafficking" specifically. This section argues that differences between sex worker activist groups grew over the 1980s around understandings of "forced" and "voluntary" prostitution in the context of the contemporary women's movement.

3.1: Discourses of Labour: Sex Work is Work

In contrast to the depiction that selling sex was criminal, sex worker activists positioned selling sex as a legitimate form of labour. All sex worker activists included in this research utilised discourses of labour to describe selling sex. The English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) argued in 1975 in their first published statement, "Prostitution is in fact dangerous and hard work".[171] Similarly, Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense (PLAN) framed the location where individuals sold sex as a "workplace" in a 1977 article they contributed to a COYOTE newsletter.[172] Language and positionality such as this were significant as they situated those who sold sex as legitimate workers and removed the specific moral stigmatisation, criminalisation and condemnation of the act of selling sex. Yet, the discourses of labour that groups utilised differed. Some groups took a liberal feminist approach in their analysis of work, and others took a socialist feminist approach. In this

[171] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'For Prostitutes Against Prostitution', 5 October 1975, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[172] Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense, 'Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense. Statement of the British Prostitutes Organisation', *COYOTE HOWLS*, Autumn 1977, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

section, I will analyse how sex worker activists framed their arguments that sex work was work and how this informed their critiques and opposition to the existing legislation.

Gender studies scholar Heather Berg analysed four sex-worker anthologies in her 2014 article "Working for Love, Loving for Work".[173] One of these included Alexander and Delacoste's *Sex Work*, with which Heather Berg argued reflections of sex worker activists frequently incorporated discourses of labour that "largely avoided critical engagement with capital in the process".[174] I argue that these conclusions are reflected beyond Alexander and Delacoste's *Sex Work* in how certain groups, namely COYOTE, the NTFP, the Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS) and COYOTE sister branches, argued that selling sex was work. Within an undated COYOTE draft paper titled 'Women in Crisis: Prostitution', they detailed their "Proposals for change".[175] In the conclusion of this paper, COYOTE argued

> It is important to remember that some prostitutes like their work, as do some writers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, secretaries, artists, and so on. We must change the law so that prostitution can become a business like any other, so that people who choose to work as prostitutes can do so without fear of arrest, and without fear of being raped, tortured, beaten and killed without protection or recourse through the legal system.[176]

COYOTE refuted the premise that sex workers must not "like their work" and highlighted the right of "choice" of profession (including sex work) and that sex work should be regulated as "a business like any other". This reflects the uncritical framework that liberal sex worker activists, such as COYOTE, took to the concept of labour, as they argued that the recognition of selling sex as work within legislation would absolve any discrimination or exploitation that sex workers might face. Further, their focus on the right of "choice" is indicative of their broader assumptions of labour

[173] Heather Berg, 'Working for Love, Loving for Work: Discourses of Labor in Feminist Sex-Work Activism', *Feminist Studies* 40, no. 3 (2014): 693–721, https://doi.org/10.1353/fem.2014.0045.
[174] Ibid, 720.
[175] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'Women in Crisis: Prostitution', n.d., 81-M32--90-M1- 27, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[176] Ibid.

under capitalism. Indeed, it ignores that the concept of "choice" might be conditional within a capitalist structure. It is, further, significant that the choice/exploitation dichotomy of selling sex was part of mainstream feminist debates in liberal and radical feminist approaches to sex work.[177] The dichotomy of choice/exploitation was explicitly referenced by COYOTE member Gail Pheterson. In Pheterson's 1989 *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores,* she criticised radical feminism which "denounces any woman who would choose to sell sex as irresponsible".[178] In contrast, COYOTE highlighted the "choice" of sex workers and this was one way in which sex worker activists formed their own understandings of sexual labour within the ongoing context of feminist debates around sex work. COYOTE utilised discourses of labour which presented an uncritical view of the capitalist structure within which the concept of work was considered as broadly free from exploitation.

Other groups, such as the FCP, the ECP and the US PROS, critically evaluated the concept of work within a capitalist economic structure.[179] These groups, within a socialist feminist approach to selling sex, argued that selling sex was work but also that all work was exploitative. The discourses of labour that these groups incorporated highlighted that work was not enjoyable and, further, that selling sex was labour simply as it reflected individuals performing labour to survive. Within the ECP's introduction to Jaget's 1980 *Prostitutes, Our Life*, the ECP argued that "We are of course encouraged to say how much we hate not only ourselves but our job- as if everyone else loves theirs. But we don't hate prostitution more than other workers hate typing or any other work".[180] Here, they removed any sense of "morality" from debates around sex work.

[177] Lara Gerassi, 'A Heated Debate: Theoretical Perspectives of Sexual Exploitation and Sex Work', *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 42, no. 4 (December 2015): 79-100.
[178] Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 20.
[179] Ibid.
[180] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Introduction: On The Game and On The Move', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 22.

The ECP situated sex work as no different from other forms of work, which, under capitalism were not necessarily "rewarding" or loved, but simply necessary for survival under capitalism. This criticised the capitalist system by questioning how individuals related to labour in all forms. Indeed, part of this analysis involved emphasising that labour under a capitalist system was overwhelmingly exploitative for the working class in all contexts. For example, a French sex worker in the documentary *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* argued

> Like the factory director and the blue collar, it's the same ladder of exploitation. The worker at the bottom of the chain gets exploited by a hundred different people till you get to the top. So exploitation isn't exclusive to prostitution. Exploitation is mirrored in society, not just in prostitution… We all agree on that.[181]

Here, the sex worker acknowledged that selling sex was work but did not remove it from an analysis that this was exploitative. Within this quote, the sex worker argued that sex work was indeed exploitative precisely because it was work. This framework argued against sex work exceptionalism and posited that sex work was no different from other forms of work as all labour involved exploitation within a capitalist economic structure. Thus, selling sex was no different from other forms of work and it should be legislated accordingly.

This perspective was shared within the broader analysis of all members of the International Prostitutes' Collective (IPC) who utilised socialist discourses of labour within their analysis of selling sex. Further, these groups highlighted the exploitation of work specifically by focusing on how this exploitation was gendered. Subsumed within the analysis of members of the IPC was not only that work was exploitative but that women especially were expected to perform specific forms of labour which contributed to their exploitation as women. Indeed, as a member of the English Collective of Prostitutes argued in a quote published in a 1977 COYOTE newsletter,

> Sex is supposed to be personal, always a free choice, different from work. But it's not a free choice when we are dependent on men for money. We women are expected to be

[181] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975), 16:00.

> sexual service stations, and because of that sex becomes a bargaining point between ourselves and men. When any of us sleeps with men, at least to some degree we are forced to consider what we are going to get in return for 'giving'- money, the rent, or better- we are making a calculation.[182]

Here, the ECP situated their analysis of work and sex work within a patriarchal capitalist socio-economic structure in which exploitation of class and gender intersected. They framed sex as a form of women's labour whether or not it was explicitly in exchange for money. The reason was that women's performance of sexual acts is often implicitly conditional within heterosexual relationships on which many women depend for economic survival within a patriarchal capitalist system. They positioned the concept of "free choice" as an illusion because consent and decision-making are permanently conditional within this socio-economic structure. They positioned both work and sex as activities individuals had to undertake to survive. COYOTE published this piece from the ECP, with a statement from the San Francisco and Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committees which added "And as we win wages for all the work we do, we develop the power to refuse prostitution- in any of its forms".[183] Assumed within their analysis was the recognition that work, under the contemporary capitalist framework, forced women to endure labour they would not necessarily optionally do, of which sexual relations were one part. Their criticism was, thus, two-fold. First, the ECP argued that the capitalist system ensured that women were dependent on men for survival and that all heterosexual sex might, in this way, be seen as a form of "prostitution". Second, they argued that should sex workers gain access to the right to sell sex under labour laws, this would enable all women who have sex or rely on men to refuse to do it as part of unpaid labour (unless they desire to). Sex worker activists argued sex work was work not

[182] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 4, Number 1', Winter 1977, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[183] San Francisco and Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee and English Collective of Prostitutes, 'An Attack On Prostitutes is an Attack on All Women, COYOTE HOWLS, Volumer 4, Number 1', 1977, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

only because of the physical labour involved but because it allowed for the emancipation of women from the existing unpaid unwanted sexual relations.

Establishing discourses of labour in discussions around selling sex was a crucial intervention of sex worker activism. Sex worker activists legitimated their actions and hoped to remove part of the stigmatisation of selling sex through the acknowledgement that it was a form of labour like any other. Yet, it is significant that sex worker activists did not have a uniform understanding of work. Some groups articulated a discourse of labour through which work under capitalism represented an opportunity for sex workers to be respected and to limit any marginalisation which they might face. Groups such as COYOTE, the NTFP and the ICPR who subscribed to a liberal feminist perspective situated themselves explicitly against radical feminists who argued that selling sex was exploitation. COYOTE, the NTFP and the ICPR emphasised the right to free choice, privacy, and bodily autonomy in their analysis of the legitimacy of sex work as work. In contrast, socialist feminist groups, such as the ECP, FCP and US PROS, argued that sex work was work but that work was exploitative hence removing prostitution exceptionalism under capitalism.

3.2: Discourses of Motherhood: "Mothers Need Money"

Sex worker activists highlighted that the identity of "motherhood" was challenged in the existing construction of "the prostitute" but that it was central to those who sold sex. As the quote from COYOTE at the start of this chapter noted, sex worker activists argued that "the prostitute" was seen as an "unfit mother".[184] This was something which sex worker activists refuted. Yet, the construction of motherhood was also central to how sex worker activists positioned themselves. Overwhelmingly, sex worker activists presented sex workers as mothers and argued repeatedly

[184] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'Coyote Growls, Volume 1, Number 3', July 1975, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

that motherhood was the central aspect of their identity. In this section, I will analyse how sex worker activists utilised discourses of motherhood within their activism to legitimise selling sex and to shift blame for child negligence on the state. The discourses of motherhood which sex worker activists articulated frequently relied on a construction of a "good mother", who went unchallenged, who was self-sacrificing, committed and whose primary identity was always their motherhood. Thus, sex workers argued not only that they were mothers but that they should be recognised as "good mothers".

Sex worker activists used the identity of motherhood as the primary explanation (and, through this, justification) for their selling sex. In 1982, directly drawing inspiration from the 1975 Saint-Nizier Occupation, the ECP occupied the Church of the Holy Cross in King's Cross, London.[185] They argued, "Mothers need money".[186] Here, sex workers were all considered "mothers" and this was the explanation given for why one might sell sex and for the activism around sex workers' rights. A French sex worker at the occupation of Saint-Nizier similarly had argued "our children are our main issue. We are women and mothers. As long as people cannot see us for what we are, we will not leave".[187] Motherhood was placed at the centre of their identity, it was used as the justification for selling sex, but it also removed "the prostitute" from the centre of discussions. This challenged discussions of selling sex from moral or philosophical conversations to a matter of economics and survival through a narrative of mothers doing all they could to provide for their children. Pluralising the identity of those who sold sex also allowed sex workers to be viewed as more than their work. As scholar Iccha Basnyat has argued in a recent

[185] Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class: The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1952-2011* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), 119.
[186] Frédérique Delacoste, ed., 'Workers: Introducing the English Collective of Prostitutes', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (London: Virago, 1988), 276.
[187] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975), 06:50.

sociological study of sex workers in Nepal, drawing on an identity of a mother "rupture[s] proscribed singular identities of being a sex worker".[188] In this way, not only did motherhood become the most important identity in how groups articulated their activism, but it also allowed sex worker activists to challenge "the prostitute" by emphasising other aspects of their identities.

Sex worker activists utilised arguments that selling sex allowed mothers to provide for their children. This framework also allowed them to shift potential negligence from themselves to the state as the agent that disrupted the family structure and caused unnecessary harm to children. At the Occupation of St Nizier Church, Lyon, in 1975 French sex workers unfurled banners that read *Nos Enfants Ne Veulent Pas Leur Mere En Prison* (Our children don't want their mothers in prison).[189] They attempted to gain support and appeal to a broad audience by highlighting that above all, they were mothers who were trying to care for their children. This was compounded by their framing in which the children were the focus, to highlight that the arresting of sex workers was unjust as it resulted in the neglect of children. In this framework, this situated the state as harming the lives of children. That the state contributed to child neglect, not sex workers, was highlighted by many of the sex worker groups. The PROS argued in an article in their 1979 newsletter titled "An Attack on Women and Children" that "prison frequently means children going into care. In the experience of PROS members this causes great distress to the children and their mothers".[190] Indeed, the actions of the state were again highlighted as causing "distress" to children who were unfairly the victims of sex worker arrests. In this way, through drawing on

[188] Iccha Basnyat, 'Stigma, Agency, and Motherhood: Exploring the Performativity of Dual Mother–Female Sex Workers Identities in Kathmandu, Nepal', *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 13, no. 2 (2 April 2020): 98, https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2020.1735486.
[189] Eurydice Aroney, 'The 1975 French Sex Workers' Revolt: A Narrative of Influence', *Sexualities* 23, no. 1–2 (February 2020): 68, https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460717741802.
[190] Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 'PROS Bulletin, No. 2', 1979, 1100/2/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, UK.

discourses of motherhood sex worker activists situated themselves as caring mothers who were worried for the safety of their children, whilst also depicting the state as the cause of familial disruption, as opposed to their work.

Further, this framework alluded to the innocence of those who sold sex. In contrast to a malicious act, selling sex was framed as a mother simply doing what she could to ensure her child was provided for. Sex worker activists highlighted in very publicised campaigns that they only sold to provide for their children. Similarly, within their introduction to the 1980 book *Prostitutes, Our Life*, the ECP argued that "pros are women from all walks of life, but above all single mothers. Through prostitution we provide the welfare the State won't provide, for us and our children, for student husbands and elderly parents".[191] This exact sentiment was shared by the British group (PLAN) in an article that they contributed to a COYOTE 1977 newsletter. PLAN argued "They have taken our children away from us and labelled us "unfit" mothers. "Unfit", because we want to provide our kids with more than we could ever give them if we were dependent on husbands or on welfare".[192] Here, PLAN situated women who sold sex as falsely accused of being negligent mothers and countered, that women who sold sex were doing all they could to ensure that their children were provided for. This, of course, highlights the economic need specifically of women with children for whom selling sex represented a viable way to sustain their families.

It is significant that these sex worker activists invested in a construction of motherhood in which mothers should and do sacrifice and went to any lengths to provide for their children. This construction of the "good mother" is detailed in sociologist Jane Dodsworth's recent exploration

[191] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Introduction: On The Game and On The Move', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 27.
[192] Helen Buckingham, 'PLAN: Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense. Statement of the British Prostitutes' Organisation in COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 4, Number 2', ed. Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, Autumn 1977, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

of motherhood and sex work.[193] Dodsworth argued that the construct of the "good mother" is built around the expectation that she is selfless and that she always prioritises her children above herself.[194] Indeed, a contributor to a 1979 PROS newsletter argued "how will she support them [her children] with no father- will she steal! Beg! Borrow! Or will she sell her body in order to feed those children and provide warmth and shelter? I speak from my own experience".[195] In this statement, the PROS argued that selling sex was comprehensible and justifiable to provide for children. Selling sex was placed as the clear answer that almost any woman would make (or *should* make in the same circumstances). This represents adherence to the idea of "maternal selflessness and goodness", through which women who sold sex were not neglectful mothers, but rather mothers who would do anything "in order to feed those children and provide warmth and shelter". As the ECP argued in a 1984 response paper to a legal committee, "prostitute women are as good and principled mothers as other women".[196] The ECP presented women who sold sex to individuals who might influence and make recommendations on sex work legislation primarily as mothers, and as "good and principled mothers", who put their children first. As sociologists Malacrida and Boulton have argued in a different context, "selflessness" is one of the "normative attributes of femininity and motherhood".[197] The argumentation of sex worker activists drew on this notion of selflessness to argue that women who sold sex were simply trying to provide for their children. Through this, they demonstrate moral merits as responsible mothers who were doing all they could

[193] Jane Dodsworth, 'Sex Worker and Mother: Managing Dual and Threatened Identities: Sex Worker and Mother', *Child & Family Social Work* 19, no. 1 (February 2014): 99–108, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2012.00889.x.
[194] Ibid, 100.
[195] Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 'PROS Bulletin, No. 2', 1979, 1100/2/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, UK.
[196] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Response to the Criminal Law Revision Committee's Working Paper on Offences Relating to Prostitution and Allied Offences', 21 February 1984, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[197] Claudia Malacrida and Tiffany Boulton, 'Women's Perceptions of Childbirth "Choices": Competing Discourses of Motherhood, Sexuality, and Selflessness', *Gender & Society* 26, no. 5 (October 2012): 750, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243212452630.

for their children. This framework of motherhood still relied on the idea of a naturalised status of the mother who would do anything and everything they could for her children. Thus, sex worker activists challenged the assumption that women who sold sex were "unfit mothers".

Sex worker activists explicitly recognised that discourses of motherhood were a useful tool in gaining supporters and sympathy for sex workers' rights. Within the introduction to Jaget's publication of French sex workers, the ECP highlighted that those at the Occupation of Saint-Nizier "introduced themselves as mothers".[198] They argued that these sex workers "knew that mothers would be interested in what they were saying, and so would everybody else, because all mothers want to feed their children, and because we all have a mother".[199] Here, the ECP drew attention to the fact that the women who occupied the church intentionally chose discourses of motherhood in an attempt to gain support and sympathy. The "mother" was depicted as a figure who was relatable, something that everyone had, and that selling sex to provide for children was an understandable and palatable act. Indeed, using this language was seen as a positive strategy, as the ECP further reflected, "A lot of people hadn't realised that prostitutes are mothers; once they did, they understood that prostitutes are just women, not so exotic, not so different, not so bad!".[200]

Thus, sex worker activists positioned motherhood as the central component of the identity of women who sold sex. They used discourses of motherhood to legitimise the need to sell sex and made their pursuit of rights palatable and understandable to a broader audience. Yet, this necessitated investment into a discourse of motherhood which portrayed it as self-sacrificing,

[198] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Introduction: On The Game and On The Move', 13.
[199] Ibid, 14.
[200] Ibid.

children as the primary priority of mothers, and more legitimated selling sex only if it was to support families and children.

3.3: The Social Identity of the Sex Worker: The Intersection of Gender and Race

Sex worker activists argued that those who sold sex were not criminals, but workers not fallen women but mothers trying to provide the best life for their children. Thus, they challenged "the prostitute" and discursively constructed the "sex worker". In this section, I will analyse how sex worker activists intervened with their own understandings of "the prostitute" and how these were both gendered and racialised. It is significant that sex worker activists overwhelmingly emphasised that sex workers were women. Their analysis of the discrimination which sex workers faced was conducted through a gendered lens. Yet, the extent to which they analysed sex work and the policing of sex work with the inclusion of how this was racialised differed. Though socialist feminist sex worker activists, broadly, placed race at the centre of this analysis, other groups did not argue that the construction of "the prostitute" or the policing of sex work was racialised.

Sex worker activists analysed sex work and the discrimination which sex workers faced on the assumption that sex workers were women. This framed their activism: sex work was work, and it was women's work. "We are women like any other!" was one of the chants of striking sex workers in Lyon in June 1975.[201] The FCP argued that sex workers were not a separate class of women. Indeed, on the basis of their womanhood, they hoped to gain support and sympathy and to remove the stigmatisation that sex workers faced. This was repeated and developed within the ECP's first position paper in 1975, which responded to ongoing debates within the London women's group, the London Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter. The ECP argued that this

[201] Heying, Mareen, 'Prostitutes' Movement- the Fight for Workers' Rights', *Moving the Social- journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements*, 59, 2018, p.6.

women's group had "not taken a decision to support prostitutes". In response, the ECP questioned, "Are prostitutes not women? The only purpose of a movement for women's liberation is to be used by women for women's ends".[202] The ECP highlighted that the struggle for sex workers' rights should certainly be supported and subsumed within the broader women's movement as it would secure "women's ends". Explicitly, within this framework "prostitutes" were synonymous with "women", and sex workers' rights were women's rights which would contribute to "women's liberation". Through this framework, sex worker activists gendered those who sold sex as female. This allowed them to situate themselves within the contemporary women's movement.

The extent to which sex worker activists incorporated race in their analysis of sex work and the policing of sex work varied greatly. Many sex worker groups acknowledged that the policing of sex work disproportionately targeted Black women. This included groups which took a liberal feminist approach in other aspects, such as COYOTE and the NTFP and socialist feminist groups such as the ECP and US PROS. By explicitly detailing racialised differences in arrests, these groups called attention to the ways that the construction of "the prostitute" was embedded with, and concomitantly reinforced, racial understandings of selling sex. Within position papers and published booklets, groups highlighted that the construction of "the prostitute" was racialised with discussions of the statistical racial differences in numbers of arrests and sentencings for prostitution-related charges. In 1978, for example, COYOTE reflected on the 1977 statistics of San Francisco that "although only about 40 percent of street prostitutes are Black, about 60 percent of those arrested, and 85 percent of those jailed are Black".[203] The US PROS detailed racialised differences in arrests in a 1988 joint publication with the ECP on AIDS, "At least 70% of people

[202] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'For Prostitutes Against Prostitution', 5 October 1975, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[203] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'National Decriminalisation A Must', circa 1978, 81-M32--90-M1- 27, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

arrested for prostitution are women. And although prostitute women in the US are white, racist policing and sentencing insure that most women convicted of prostitution and sent to prison are Black".[204] These groups called attention to the racial differences in law enforcement on two levels. Both with how likely policing officers were to arrest Black individuals and within court how likely Black sex workers were to be sentenced to incarceration. By highlighting that Black women were disproportionately likely to be arrested for selling sex, sex worker activists revealed the extent to which the police assumed Black women to be sex workers and sex workers to be Black women. While the US PROS, ECP and COYOTE situated disproportionate arrests of Black people within a broader context of "racist policing", as the US PROS argued, in which the same discrepancies might be found for other crimes, they nonetheless highlighted that this was especially true of crimes relating to selling sex. Thus, both these groups argued, and disputed, that the prostitute imaginary, in this context, was built around, and perpetuated, racial understandings of sex work.

Not all sex worker activist groups centred race within their analysis of sex work discrimination. Beyond the detailing of racialised arrests of sex workers, COYOTE, for example, did not criticise the way "the prostitute" might be embedded with and perpetuating of certain understandings of race. The PROS, who were a liberal feminist group, argued that the construction of "the prostitute" and the policing of sex work was abstract from constructions of race. In a 1980 newsletter the PROS detailed in an article titled "A Night Out" an event in which the London PROS, the ECP and PLAN had representatives who spoke and answered questions on sex work. The PROS noted, however, that these discussions "deteriorated when an attempt was made to focus on race, with a speaker suggesting that black people were more subject to harassment under

[204] English Collective of Prostitutes and US PROStitutes Collective, 'Prostitute Women and AIDS: Resisting the Virus of Repression', 1988, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

soliciting laws".[205] The Chairman of the London PROS, Jayne Maynard, wrote in the newsletter that in response to this speaker, the PROS "members spelt it out that all prostitutes, male and female, black and white, were subject to harassment".[206] PROS were one group that frequently used female pronouns and referred to sex workers predominantly as "women". Indeed, they argued, for example, in an article written in 1979, the year prior, "Prostitution exists because men have the power and women need the money".[207] It is striking then, that in the 1980 meeting, and subsequent newsletter, they highlighted "male and female, black and white" to dispute how the policing of sex work might be impacted by a racialised construction of the sex worker. This contradiction in the PROS' analysis demonstrated that they privileged a gendered analysis of sex work yet did not engage with racialised constructions or experiences of sex work. The PROS used a gender-only feminist analysis which denied the significance of other constructions of identity, such as race or class, in the discourses and experiences of selling sex.

The PROS also contradicted these analyses of the irrelevance of race in debates around sex work in their visual representations of sex workers. Across their newsletters, within cartoons, the sex workers that the PROS depicted always had multiple ethnicities.[208] Citing one example of this, British historian Kieran Connell argued that the PROS made "attempts to engage with the increasingly fraught politics of race" within their activism.[209] While, certainly, these cartoons draw attention to the connections between race, gender and sex work, by an acknowledgement that not all sex workers were white, it is striking that within articles which detailed the discrimination

[205] Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 'PROS STREET BEAT, No.4', 1980, 1100/2/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, UK.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 'PROS Campaign Event!', October 1979, 1100/2/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, UK.
[208] For example: Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 'PROS STREET BEAT, No.4'.
[209] Kieran Connell, 'PROS: The Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 1976–1982', *Twentieth Century British History* 31, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 18, https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz032.

which sex workers faced, any race is never explicitly mentioned or discussed within their understanding of how sex work was constructed or regulated. Indeed, especially in comparison to the British group the ECP, beyond a representation that some sex workers were non-white, these engagements with race did less to "engage with the increasingly fraught politics of race", as Connell claimed.[210]

Socialist feminist groups, such as the ECP, the FCP and the US PROS, saw the intersection of race and gender as crucial in the construction and policing of sex work. Historians Baxandall and Gordon noted that "socialist feminists weighed issues of race and class equally with those of gender and tried to develop an integrated, holistic theory of the society".[211] Baxandall and Gordon's argument for how socialist feminists developed theory is reflected in groups such as the ECP, the FCP and the US PROS. These groups highlighted that demanding the right to sell sex was intimately connected with increasing labour rights for women, working-class women and Black women. Wilmette Brown, part of the Black Women for Wages for Housework (USA), spoke at the anniversary of the FCP occupations, on behalf of the ECP and the US PROS, in Paris in June 1976. She argued that "the struggle of prostitute women in France has been a great power for all prostitute women in the USA and for all Black women".[212] This argument was both because "Even if a Black woman is not a prostitute, when she walks the streets the police often arrest her for prostitution", and because this was subsumed within their wider argumentation of Wages for Housework which included "sexual work".[213] Brown's argument explicitly highlighted that the construction of "the prostitute" in the US, Britain and France was racialised and policed in

[210] Ibid.
[211] Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, 'Second-Wave Feminism', in *A Companion to American Women's History: Hewitt/A Companion*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 418, https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998595.
[212] Ibid.
[213] 'The State Is the Biggest Pimp', 1976, 81-M32--90-M1- 546, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

accordance with this construction. Brown concluded that "this struggle is also the struggle of Black women… because the struggle to be paid for the work we do is the struggle not only to prostitute women but of all women".[214] The analysis of the IPC, which centred on the economic structure of capitalism as the cause for sex work, incorporated how this economic structure was built around, and upheld, gender and racial hierarchies. Within this analysis, therefore, the IPC argued that institutional and economic structures which framed the US and France ensured that Black people, and women especially, were placed at the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy. The intersection of race, gender, and class, formed how the IPC related the liberation of sex workers to the liberation of women.

It is pertinent that when the ECP, US PROS and COYOTE addressed how racial understandings of sex work informed the policing of sex work to varying degrees, this was within a dichotomous view of race. The analysis of these sex worker activist groups was subsumed within a "Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race" in which a conception of race consisted, as legal scholar Juan Perea argued, "either exclusively or primarily, of only two constitute racial groups, the Black and the White".[215] Thus, it is significant to note that while some groups attempted to incorporate how the construction of "the prostitute" was racialised, their analysis failed to include non-Black people of colour. These silences are equally important in considering how sex worker activists critiqued the construction of sex work and the policing of sex work and the extent to which they saw race as intersecting with gender within their analysis of sexual labour.

[214] Nina Lopez-Jones and English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Workers: Introducing the English Collective of Prostitutes', in *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, by Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, 276, (London: Virago, 1988).
[215] Juan F. Perea, 'The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The Normal Science of American Racial Thought', *California Law Review* 85, no. 5 (1997), 1219, https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38MF05.

3.4: The Concept of Sex Trafficking

How sex worker activists constructed sex work in relation to discourses of labour and in relation to race and gender also informed their use and engagement with the concept of "sex trafficking". During the 1980s differences between sex worker activist groups, liberal and socialist, exacerbated especially around the concept of sex trafficking. The extent to which sex trafficking had to be addressed and whether anti-trafficking activists should be allies to sex worker activism was fiercely debated.

A key point was whether one could make a distinction between "forced" and "voluntary" prostitution. Some sex worker groups, namely COYOTE and the NTFP, made a clear distinction between "forced" and "voluntary" prostitution and were explicitly supportive of anti-trafficking legislation and activism. Differences between "voluntary prostitution" and "forced prostitution" were often established within the very first paragraphs of COYOTE or NTFP position papers or general descriptions about the groups themselves. In 1985, the NTFP published a paper titled "Working Positions on Prostitution" and framed their "political goals" as the "Decriminalization of all aspects of voluntary adult prostitution".[216] Here, the NTFP centred their political goal of decriminalisation of selling sex as conditional on consent and around the concept of "voluntary". Margo St James detailed in 1988 that COYOTE/NTFP also supported the notion that "No mutual voluntary aspects of prostitution should be criminal… Laws relating to violence and forced prostitution should remain".[217] Whilst they did not detail the conditions that made sex work voluntary or involuntary, COYOTE and the NTFP's understanding of sex work and sex work legislation was that it was intimately concerned with this distinction.

[216] National Task Force on Prostitution, 'Working Positions on Prostitution', 1985, 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[217] Margo St James, 'COYOTE/ National Task Force on Prostitution', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (London: Virago, 1988), 290.

COYOTE explicitly upheld the concept of sex trafficking and supported the need for anti-trafficking legislation. Their proposals for the 1986 United States Hookers Convention argued that "Anti-trafficking laws should be enforced only against those who use fraud, deceit, force, violence, or the threat of violence to coerce women to travel across state and national boundaries for the purposes of prostitution".[218] Here, COYOTE detailed the differences between trafficking and sex work. They implicitly referenced the possibility that anti-trafficking legislation might be used against sex workers. They continued that anti-trafficking legislation "should not be used to prevent or punish the voluntary travel by adults for the purposes of sexual work".[219] Through this analysis, COYOTE depended on law enforcement for the regulation of trafficking.

The ECP and US PROS differed significantly in their approach to sex trafficking. The ECP and US PROS did not directly refer to "trafficking" or "anti-trafficking" within their policy recommendations or analysis of sex work. They repeated their belief, however, that any increase in criminalising selling sex ultimately worked against sex workers. For example, the ECP argued in 1989 that debates around the legitimacy of women selling sex "has always led to so-called feminists strengthening the hand of the police against everyone".[220] While this was not in specific reference to debates around sex trafficking, they referenced here the "split in the women's movement on the issue of women working as prostitutes" which, in part, encompassed debates over sex trafficking. Though the ECP did not directly address the concept of sex trafficking within their activism in the 1980s, they disagreed more broadly on an increase in criminal legislation.

[218] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'Proposals for Policy', 1985, 81-M32--90-M1-31, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Nina Lopez-Jones and English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Workers: Introducing the English Collective of Prostitutes', in *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, by Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (London: Virago, 1988).

The ECP and US PROS did not make a clear distinction between "forced" and "voluntary" sex work. Indeed, the ECP and US PROS specifically only used the word "forced" around selling sex in relation to poverty. In 1980, the ECP wrote a letter to the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to urge the TUC to support increased benefits for women. In this letter, they argued, "with the economic crisis and rising prices, even more women have been forced into prostitution to give our children and ourselves a more decent standard of living".[221] Similarly, in the introduction to the booklet the US PROS and the ECP published in 1988, the US PROS argued that in contrast to increasing regulation of sex workers, the state "should provide money and resources for women and children so that no one is forced into prostitution by poverty".[222] The US PROS and the ECP frequently utilised the language of "force" around selling sex but in relation to women who had no other way to economically sustain themselves. The US PROS and ECP's utilisation of the language of "force" around selling sex and poverty reinforced their analysis that the capitalist patriarchal structure caused the proliferation of women who had to sell sex to survive. Within this analysis, "choice" and "consent" were explicitly complicated under a capitalist system that shaped the options available to individuals, especially women. As opposed to COYOTE or the NTFP, who made a clear distinction between "voluntary" and "forced" sex work, the ECP and US PROS did not explicitly engage in debates around sex trafficking, but they did utilise the language of "force" in reference to poverty as leaving individuals with few options.

An argument between liberal and socialist sex worker activists occurred in 1980 which is recorded both within COYOTE member Gail Pheterson's 1989 *A Vindication of the Rights of*

[221] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'English Collective of Prostitutes Letter to Len Murray, General Secretary at Trades Union Congress', 16 May 1980, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[222] English Collective of Prostitutes and US PROStitutes Collective, 'Prostitute Women and AIDS: Resisting the Virus of Repression', 1988, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

Whores and within the private correspondence of COYOTE leader Margo St James.[223] Within the archives which hold the materials of the ECP and the US PROS, however, their perspective on this debate is not preserved. In a letter written in 1981 by Margo St James to Jean-Jacques Lebel, a French artist and political activist, St James noted that at the UN's World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980 she "got into a terrible fight with Selma James in Denmark. We called each other pimps".[224] Selma James was the contemporary spokeswoman for the ECP and a member of the Wages for Housework Campaign. St James continued, that this argument resulted as St James "was supportive of the Asian Women and Kathy Barry, Female Sexual Slavery author who ran some workshops in Copenhagen and put together a great international network".[225] That these debates were specifically in relation to debates around sex trafficking and they "called each other pimps" highlights that Margo St James and Selma James saw sex trafficking as a debate which fundamentally denied women's agency. Margo St James' letter detailed that the sex worker activist Griselidis Real who was organising in France had "warned" St James "against the Wages Campaign" but that she "had already had my falling out with them so it came too late to save any hurt feelings".[226] Here, St James highlighted this was a significant rift within sex worker activism and that the debates around sex trafficking were contentious between sex worker activist groups. Though COYOTE and the ECP had significant political differences in all their analysis around selling sex, this was the first time that groups specifically raised a large drift between groups. Gail Pheterson, who worked with COYOTE, noted that the 1980 argument between Selma James and Margo St James "severed the working relationship between COYOTE and the two collectives [the

[223] Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989).
[224] Margo St James, 'Letter from "Margo, Jennifer, et Al".', 5 March 1981, 81-M32--90-M1-546, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.

ECP and Wages for Housework Campaign]".[227] Pheterson published this reflection in 1989 and, thus, implies the cooperation between the US liberal feminists and the socialist feminists involved in sex worker activism in both the US, France and Britain remained minimal throughout the 1980s.

Debates around trafficking were not significant only amongst and between those who were against sex work and those who supported sex workers but were prominent between sex worker activists. Whether and how sex worker activist groups utilised discourses of "forced" sex work demonstrated their broader understandings of sex work and its causes. The debates over sex trafficking which emerged in the 1980s incorporated their understandings of discourses of labour, detailed in section 3.1, and whether groups interpreted work (and sex work) as a "choice". These debates also were partly informed by the relationship which sex worker activists took with law enforcement and whether the police protected women through increased criminalisation or not.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I explored the discourses sex worker activists have used to reframe "the prostitute". Re-constructing society's notions about those who sold sex was central to sex worker activism as they hoped to legitimise their actions, limit discrimination, and justify a new legal framework around selling sex. Their discursive choices were significant. Positioning those who sold sex as workers, though through different discourses of labour, legitimised their claims that sex work should be organised not under criminal laws but labour codes. Through drawing on discourses of motherhood, they stressed their innocence and became palatable members of a campaign which hoped to receive mass support from the women's movement. Both these strategies were significant in framing their pursuit of the decriminalisation of sex work by deconstructing typical images of "the prostitute".

[227] Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 36.

It is, further, significant that whilst challenging the construction of "the prostitute" sex worker activists argued that discrimination assumed that those who sold sex were women, yet they had a far more ambiguous analysis of how constructions of race might be co-constructed in and through specific constructions of sex work. Sex worker activist groups did not agree on the conceptual distinctions between "forced" and "voluntary" sex work. This rift within sex worker activism represented the culmination of the different political perspectives between liberal and socialist sex worker activists that had marked their activism as they emerged in the 1970s. Thus, I conclude that while all sex worker activists challenged the construction of "the prostitute" in significant ways, they offered different constructions of "sex work".

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCOURSES OF SEXUALITY: SEXUAL ACTS, SEXUAL DESIRE, AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

This chapter analyses the different ways that sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France in the 1970s and 1980s constructed sexuality, including how they negotiated understandings of women's sexuality within an analysis of sex work; how they disrupted contemporary understandings of the relationships between sexual acts, sexual desire, and sexual identities; and finally, how sex worker activism meant that despite these discursive interventions, heteronormative constructions of sex work were reinforced through their activism. In this chapter, I argue that sex worker activists disputed conventional constructions of sexuality and sexual identity. By doing so, sex worker activists refuted the "prostitute imaginary" as they rejected the "fantasies and fears about sex" which constructed "prostitution".[228] This chapter largely utilises sources that present singular understandings of sex work and sexuality that sex worker activists produced.

The 'genealogical' project which underlines many histories of sexuality highlights how certain forms of historical work aim to uncover and "reclaim" previously overlooked histories of individuals whose sexual identities are understood within present-day conceptualisation.[229] In a direct challenge to this, British historian Laura Doan introduced "critical queer history" to the history of sexuality in 2013. This produced the recognition of histories in which sexological classifications exist in the mainstream, but within which, experiences of individuals contradict these taxonomic categories.[230] With the need to look beyond "the habit of naming the modern

[228] Ibid.
[229] Laura L. Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 58; Joan Nestle, 'Lesbians and Prostitutes: A Historical Sisterhood', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (London: Virago, 1988).
[230] Elsa Richardson, 'New Queer Histories: Laura Doan's *Disturbing Practices* and the Constance Maynard Archive', *Women's History Review* 25, no. 1 (2 January 2016): 163, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1047249.

sexual subject", Doan argued that historians should endeavour to incorporate "knowledge practices outside the logic of this framework".[231] The history of sex worker activism in France, the UK and the US in the 1970s and 1980s offers a history in which sexuality was discussed in ways that fit Doan's reflections of "defamiliarizing and destabilizing categories of identity".[232] On the one hand, sex worker activists utilised the normative language of "carefully attuned" sexual identities. On the other hand, through an analysis of the discourses of sexuality that sex worker activists presented, they complicated constructions of women's sexuality. This allowed sex worker activists to reframe sex as work and selling sex as sex work.

In section 4.1, I analyse the ways sex worker activists criticised the construction of "prostitution" in relation to broader understandings of women's sexuality. Partly, I argue, sex worker activists utilised discourses of sexuality and labour to argue against sex work exceptionalism. In section 4.2, I analyse the ways sex worker activists constructed discourses around sexual acts. This, in part, formed sex worker activists' framing of sex as work and rejection of radical feminist assertions that selling sex was oppressive for women. In section, 4.3, I explore how sex worker activists challenged normative understandings of heterosexual relationships. I argue that the depiction of a "private" sexuality was significant to how sex worker activists framed their own identity. Lastly, in section 4.4, I assess the discourses of sexual identities which sex worker activists presented. I contend that sex worker activists at times queered understandings of sexual acts and sexual identities in relation to women's sexuality.

[231] Laura L. Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 139.
[232] Ibid, 58.

4.1: Sex Work and Women's Sexuality: "All Women Are Prostitutes"

Sex worker activists in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s argued that their activism and liberation were necessary to the broader goal of women's liberation. Sex worker activists framed sex work as a feminist issue, principally, by situating sexual labour within ongoing debates concerning the autonomy of women and, specifically, the extent to which they could set the terms of their own sexuality. As I analysed in section 3.1, sex worker activists incorporated discourses of labour into their analysis of selling sex. In this section, I explore how sex worker activists constructed sex work as work in relation to an understanding of "women's sexuality". I argue that sex worker activists argued against sex work exceptionalism through analysis of the relation between sex work and sexuality.

Sex worker activists argued that sexual acts formed part of the labour of *all* women, in any given context. In other words, sex worker activists argued that women's sexuality was part of women's unpaid labour, which sex work, thus, challenged. This idea was apparent during one of the first and largest sex worker protests, the Occupation of Saint-Nizier Church in Lyon in 1975, when a sex worker argued "Any woman can get into prostitution with her boss, her manager, or often her husband. A lot of women get married because they're pregnant... It's long-term prostitution, or even prostitution for life".[233] Part of sex workers' argument for the legitimacy of sex work as *work*, was that women's sexuality was already bartered, stolen from women, and part of the feminised labour which women within heterosexual couples did. Implicit within the analysis of some sex worker activists in the UK, US, and France, namely the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), the French Collective of Prostitutes (FCP), the US PROStitutes Collective (US PROS), was the recognition that a capitalist structure forced women to endure labour they would

[233] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975), 37:00.

not necessarily optionally do. Within their first statement, the ECP made references to sexual acts which included statements such as "Whether we fuck for money...", "Fucking with those men is part of the work", "the cash makes it clear that women are working when we are fucking, dressing up, being nice, putting make-up on, whenever we relate to men".[234] Sexual relations were depicted as something, among several other performances of femininity, which were already undertaken by women to have enough money to survive and to successfully perform their role within a heterosexual relationship or context. Indeed, the ECP regarded the liberation of sex workers as an articulation of the liberation of women. The argument that sex was work (in any situation) complicated clear delineations between sex workers and other women. By disputing a distinction between sex workers and other women, sex worker activists also legitimated their contested position within the women's movement and legitimated their struggle for sex workers' rights.

Article One of the ECP's first manifesto in 1975 drew attention to the idea that "Most women are partly or wholly dependent on men for food, money, clothes and accommodation".[235] Here, the ECP framed sex work as one way in which women could make financial gains within a gendered economic structure. According to the ECP, all women depended on men and, thus sex work was no different from any other way in which women had to depend on men for survival through, for example, marriage. In their statement, the ECP noted, "All work is prostitution… All women are prostitutes". The ECP argued that women's sexuality was already something that formed part of the continuous negotiation of power balances within a heteronormative, patriarchal and capitalist socio-economic structure.[236] This analysis was shared by a French sex worker at the occupation of St Nizier who argued that "all women are driven to prostitution, Whether it be a secretary who

[234] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'For Prostitutes Against Prostitution', 5 October 1975, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.

sleeps with the boss so she doesn't get fired or the shopgirl who lets herself be felt up so she doesn't get fired".[237] This sex worker highlighted that within any profession, women's sexuality was currency which ensured economic survival. These sex worker activists, in Britain and France, argued that women's sexuality was only understandable by placing it within a gendered economic structure. They argued that all women's work, and women's sexuality, must fundamentally be considered within this paradigm. Sex worker activists framed sexual acts as a form of gendered labour which women had to undertake, whether they were sex workers or not. Implicit within their analysis was that sex workers were female and that they were heterosexual, and, further, that women's sexuality did have a crucial place within arguments for the legitimacy of sex work, that it was central to the *work* of sex work.

Groups such as the National Task Force on Prostitution (NTFP) and Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) tied sex work to women's sexuality more broadly in arguing that "the laws against prostitution, and the stigma imposed on sex work, in some way act to keep all women from determining their own sexuality".[238] Within this understanding, sex work was presented as one articulation of women's sexuality, which the state worked to control. By framing sex work in this way, COYOTE and the NTFP also argued that sex workers' rights should be a feminist goal in which women's access to sexual freedom could be achieved. Indeed, the NTFP argued in a 1987 paper titled "Violence Against Prostitutes", that "So long as women who trade sexual services for money are arrested and jailed, no woman truly has the right to set any terms for her sexual encounters".[239] The NTFP and COYOTE argued that the policing of sex work ensured that

[237] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975), 3:00.
[238] National Task Force on Prostitution and Priscilla Alexander, 'On Prostitution', February 1987, 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[239] National Task Force on Prostitution, Priscilla Alexander, and Gloria Lockett, 'Violence Against Prostitutes', 1987, 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

women's sexuality was policed more broadly. This argument rejected sex work exceptionalism, by depicting selling sex as one example where women established "terms for her sexual encounters" that the state controlled. Thus, sex work was not depicted with a particular moral weight any different to other sexual encounters. COYOTE and the NTFP's framework presented sex workers' exploitation within a broader system of patriarchal control which all women were subject.

Sex worker activist groups explicitly subsumed their activism within the contemporary women's movement by arguing against sex work exceptionalism. All groups related the control of selling sex to the control of women's sexuality. Socialist groups, such as the FCP, the ECP and the US PROS, argued against sex work exceptionalism through a critical analysis of capitalism and women's position within it. They argued that sexual acts, in any context, were for women a form of currency which allowed for their economic survival. Groups such as the NTFP and COYOTE were not critical of capitalism, as argued in section 3.1. Rather, these groups depicted sex work as an articulation of women's sexuality which the state worked to suppress.

4.2: The Sex of Sex Work: "It's not sexual; it's *work*"

Through an analysis of the sexual acts involved in sex work which make them both *sex* and *work* discretely, historian Heather Lee Miller concluded in her 2004 article that sex work "queers our understandings of both sexual identity and work identity".[240] In this section, I argue that sex worker activists disrupted discourses of sexuality through arguments that sexual acts could be uncoupled from sexual desire. Through arguments that selling sex was work and distinct from other sexual experiences, sex worker activists resituated sex as a task. The way sex worker activists presented

[240] Heather Lee Miller, 'Trick Identities: The Nexus of Work and Sex', *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (2004): 147, https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2004.0018.

sexuality was not monolithic. The variation within constructions of their own sexualities, however, illustrates, as Lee Miller described, the "constant negotiation between "sex" and "work"".[241]

Further, sex worker activists disrupted discourses of sexuality by arguing that consensual participation in sexual acts and the implication of sexual desire were uncoupled. Peggy Morgan, an American sex worker, wrote in 1988 that the sex worker "also knows that what she does for money is not an expression of her sexuality. It may look like sex but it sure doesn't feel like anything she does with lovers".[242] Here, Morgan highlighted that, through viewing sex work as work, she saw it as removed from "an expression of her sexuality". It was the transaction of "for money" which altered the meaning of sexual acts. She presented her experience of sex with customers and her personal relationships as distinctly separated. Morgan emphasised that a lack of emotional connection to her customers altered the "feel" of sex as opposed to "with lovers". Similarly, a French sex worker speaking at the occupation of St Nizier Church in Lyon argued "We don't make love, we perform an action… Prostitutes cannot do these things with clients, only someone they have feelings for".[243] This sex worker argued that selling sex should not be considered different from other forms of work, as sex work did not involve any emotional intimacy. Within her depiction, "sex" had two meanings, one at work, where it entailed the performance of "an action", and another outside of work, where it had an emotional depth which involved "love" or "feelings". Both this French sex worker and Morgan made a clear distinction in how they experienced sex with clients and in their personal relationships. These assertions were shared by French sex worker "C", who wrote that when considering sexual relations with clients versus in her private life, "A client doesn't matter one bit. I can strip down in front of him, that's

[241] Ibid.
[242] Peggy Morgan, 'Living On The Edge', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste (London: Virago, 1988), 26.
[243] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975), 42:00-42:25.

no problem for me. With a boyfriend, that's impossible".[244] These depictions of sex work and sex which were purported by sex worker activists contested hegemonic constructions of sexuality. Sex worker activists argued that sites of intimacy could remain unaffected by sex work, and, that the same consensual sexual activity could have a multitude of meanings depending on the context. Through this, sex worker activists argued that sexual acts could be uncoupled from desire, intimacy, or satisfaction.

Furthermore, sex worker activists also highlighted that sexual acts could hold multiple meanings for those involved. This formed part of the challenge to radical feminist objections that sex work embodied patriarchal control, and the ability of men to own women's sexuality. Priscilla Alexander, a prominent member of COYOTE, wrote in her chapter within the 1988 *Sex Work*,

> Prostitution involves an equation of sex with power: for the man/customer, the power consists of his ability to 'buy' access to any number of women; for the woman/prostitute, the power consists of her ability to set the terms of her sexuality, and demand substantial payment for her time and skills.[245]

Alexander suggested that sex work, in how it was experienced by both sex workers and the customer, was able to hold two separate meanings within one sexual act or interaction. The customer believed he was utilising his power to gain accessing a woman's body, or her sexuality, yet the sex worker saw her work as a demonstration of her own power over her sexuality, a sexuality for which she was compensated. Not only did these testimonies argue that sex workers sold the fantasy of the hegemonic construction of sexual acts and desire to their customers, but also that the duality of the sexual act ensured that sex workers independently held a different meaning in which the sexual act was seen as labour. Sex workers refuted the radical feminist

[244] C, 'We Take It For All Women', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 110.
[245] Priscilla Alexander, 'Prostitution: A Difficult Issue For Feminists', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (London: Virago, 1988), 189.

discourse that sexual acts and sexual labour represented only the display of male power over female sexuality, and they highlighted the multiplicity of power relations that were embedded within sexual acts. Women's sexuality was positioned as being able to allow sex workers increased power within the context of, as historian Stephanie Gilmore conceptualised, "the nexus of women's sexuality and the capitalist economy".[246] Sex workers and sex worker activism complicated critiques of the sex industry which attempted to reduce power exchanges to one channel and argued for the multiplicity of ways in which power was negotiated through sex work.

4.3: Policing Sexuality: "We Wish For a Man We Can Stay With"

In this section, I will explore the tension within how sex worker activists constructed their private sexual relationships. This is analysed through the lens of "monogamy" which, at times, sex worker activists directly challenged yet, at others, sex worker activists demonstrated a desired adherence to a monogamous relationship. Sex worker activists argued that sexual acts could be engaged in without reflecting any abject sexual desire, correlating to a fixed sexual identity or jeopardising a monogamous private relationship. This distinction is significant in revealing the epistemic significance of sex worker activists in challenging or upholding contemporary understandings of stable understandings of sexuality and producing alternative forms of feminist knowledge.[247]

Sex workers challenged normative conceptions of heterosexual marriage or relationships when they engaged in sexual acts and sexual relationships outside of work. That many sex workers were married or in long-term external relationships came up frequently under activism which targetted the various 'pimping' laws in the US, the UK and France. As discussed in section 2.1,

[246] Stephanie Gilmore, '11. Strange Bedfellows: Building Feminist Coalitions around Sex Work in the 1970s', in *No Permanent Waves*, by Nancy A. Hewitt, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Rutgers University Press, 2019), 266, https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813549170-013.

[247] Elizabeth Anderson, 'Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and a Defense', *Hypatia* 10, no. 3 (1995): 10.

pimping laws were used in each of these countries to arrest men who were deemed to "profit" from the earnings of an individual who sold sex. Sex worker activists in all these countries spoke out against the ways policing of pimps worked to disrupt sex workers' personal lives and relationships. At the occupation of St Nizier Church in 1975, a sex worker from Lyon argued, "What's aberrant is that whoever is in a relationship with a prostitute, it's automatically pimping! Like we can't be with a man outside of that. It's so wrong!".[248] In France, Britain and the US, sex worker activists argued that pimping laws were used to increase surveillance of sex workers and allow for intervention within their personal lives. In 1984, the ECP wrote a response paper to the Criminal Law Revision Committee which was a committee of legal experts who advised the British Parliament on legal issues and produced recommendations for legislative alterations. Within this paper, the ECP argued that

> the police have the power to arrest boyfriends and husbands without the consent and even against the will of the women they are supposed to be protecting. In our experience, most of the men arrested as pimps and ponces are innocent men.[249]

The ECP criticised first the expansive "power" that the police had specifically in relation to sex work legislation. Within scholarly work, The ECP argued that the police defined offences as they wished, "without the consent and *even* against the will" of sex workers. The ECP furthered their criticism of the police by highlighting the contradiction of the policing of sex work in the UK. While sex work legislation was justified as "protecting" sex workers, the ECP argued that, in contrast, legislation was used by police to interfere with sex workers' lives beyond work. Sex worker activists called attention to how sex work was policed and how the law, and especially the formal and informal policing of sex work, was built around the idea of a monogamous heterosexual

[248] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975), 15:10.
[249] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Response to the Criminal Law Revision Committee's Working Paper on Offences Relating to Prostitution and Allied Offences', 21 February 1984, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

couple. The ECP's analysis also highlighted the policing of sex work was built around the assumption that sex workers could not exist outside of their identity as sex workers, their consistent heterosexual relationships were assumed to be tied to their work. Sex worker activists argued that the policing of sex work ensured that sex workers felt that their private romantic and sexual relationships were threatened. Policing bodies assumed that any man who associated with a sex worker, and was not a customer, was a pimp, and sex worker activists challenged this in their protest of these arrests. By challenging the assumptions sex workers could not have private relationships, sex worker activists also challenged traditional ideas of monogamy.

Indeed, many sex workers *did* have relationships outside of work, which were often monogamous. As a French sex worker argued at the Occupation of St Nizier Church, "We're [prostitutes] looking for someone long-term. We wish for a man we can stay with. We don't want to change partners often".[250] It is possible to see that sex workers still did attempt to fit within these normative frameworks of monogamous, heterosexual relationships. At the same time, they argued that their attempts to do so were limited by the existing policing and the police's constructions of sexuality. A French sex worker activist wrote in 1980,

> Even when a pro wants to have a normal relationship with a man, she can't do it… If I find someone nice, and we make love together and then see each other again, well sooner or later he risks being done for pimping.[251]

Here, sex workers argued that within their own constructions of sexuality, they were able to conceive of a "normal relationship", but this was limited by how their sexual relationships were policed. Thus, while sex workers were attempting to legitimise their labour and their sexuality, they simultaneously queered contemporary understandings of heterosexual love, relationships and

[250] Carole Roussopoulos, *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (VIDEO OUT, 1975), 35:33.
[251] D, 'What Right Have They Got?', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980).

monogamy which were embedded in the policing of sex work and argued for a discourse of sexuality that was much broader than the existing conceptions allowed for. On the one hand, they argued that they had, or wanted, a "normal relationship" outside of work and criticised the policing of their personal sexual relationships. On the other hand, the very separation of personal life and work in terms of sexual relationships explicitly challenged normative understandings of the permanence of monogamy.

4.4: Sex Work and Sexual Identity: "I'm Saturated by Men and Their Prick"

In the 1970s and 1980s, sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France framed sex work as a "site of powerful sexual pluralism", as Zatz conceptualised, through which sexual identities and sexual experiences were not necessarily mapped onto one another.[252] In this section, I explore how sex worker activists presented understandings of sexual identities and the extent to which they argued their construction of sexuality was complicated through sex work.

Self-identified lesbian sex workers performed or engaged in intercourse with men as part of their profession. A sex worker speaking at an event on specifically the existence of lesbian sex workers in 1982 acknowledged "many prostitute women are lesbians".[253] While American lesbian stripper "Peggy Morgan" felt that the idea that there was a "disproportionate number of lesbians [who] work in this business" was "pure bunk", nonetheless her publication within *Sex Work* demonstrated that there certainly were lesbian sex workers, who engaged in heterosexual sex acts and sexual fantasies. Similarly, an unnamed English sex worker wrote in the ECP's 1988 booklet "Prostitute Women and AIDS: Resisting the Virus of Repression", "I am a single mother and a

[252] Noah D. Zatz, 'Sex Work/Sex Act: Law, Labor, and Desire in Constructions of Prostitution', *Signs* 22, no. 2 (1997): 306.
[253] A speaker at "Prostitutes: Our Life: Lesbian and Straight", San Francisco, June, 1982, quoted in Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, eds., *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (London: Virago, 1988), 231.

lesbian, who has been working as a prostitute in a massage parlor for the past 18 months… Straight sex is the least work for me".[254] For these women, selling sexual acts and sexual fantasies within a heterosexual framework did not compromise their own sexual identity as "lesbians". The statement that "straight sex is the least work for me" highlighted this separation between sex and desire and the overlap between sex and work. In their framing of sexuality, these sex worker activists both utilised and challenged mainstream typologies of sexual identity. The use of typologies is seen most explicitly in the first public statement of the ECP when they argued "The prostitute, lesbian or "straight", refuses the unlimited emotional and sexual work (and laundry) that normally accompany relations with men".[255] The quotation marks around "straight" suggest that the ECP recognised that sex work represented a site that presented contested sexual identities, in which they had already queered understandings of categories of sexual identity within the existing heterosexual framework through the very act of demanding money for sexual acts.

Furthermore, some sex worker activists argued that their engagement with sex work caused them to have a more permeable understanding of sexual identities than the existing binary which prevailed. French sex worker "B" described in 1975 that she was "not attracted to women; but on the other hand, if I didn't want to sleep with men any more I wouldn't mind having 'lesbian' experiences", and continued, "It even attracts me more than with men, and I think that's because of the job, because I'm saturated by men and their prick".[256] Here, "B" framed her sexuality as something fluid, which had, and could change, and was something beyond a heteronormative binary. Similarly, "Nina Hartley", an American feminist porn star, explained that her husband

[254] English Collective of Prostitutes and US PROStitutes Collective, 'Prostitute Women and AIDS: Resisting the Virus of Repression', 1988, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[255] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'For Prostitutes Against Prostitution', 5 October 1975, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.
[256] B, 'It's Not Outside Morality', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 89.

"gave full support for my long-dormant lesbian side; for the past four years I have lived with him and his long term woman lover in a close-knit, loving, supportive and intellectually stimulating *menage-a-trois*".[257] These women challenged the heteronormative binary of sexuality and the concrete categorisation of sexual identities. Despite utilising the language of sexual identities such as "lesbian", how they discussed these contrasted with typical contemporary understandings of such categories. Though, as discussed in 2.2, many sex worker activists argued for a more expansive understanding of heterosexuality, these examples also highlight the extension of this to other sexual identities. The way these sex worker activists framed sexuality challenged, in both cases, the extent to which sexual identities could be linked with sexual acts and sexual behaviours.

While this highlights the extent to which sex worker activists ruptured concrete understandings of sexuality and sexual identities that mainstream discourses would perpetuate, this separation of professional and personal sexual desires was not the universal experience of sex workers. Considering her personal sexual experiences, French sex worker "C" noted that:

> If I go out with a man and flirt with him, and at the end of the evening he makes it clear that he wants me, it gets my back up. It gets my back up if I make love with a man and he wants to start touching me.[258]

These sentiments are shared by French sex worker "D", who argued that "being a pro brings with it a greater wariness in relation to men. We're kind of up to our ears with men".[259] For these women, their sexual experiences with men during their working hours bled into their own lives in a way that limited their expression of their sexualities and sexual experiences outside of work, they

[257] Nina Hartley, 'Confessions of a Feminist Porn Star', in *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (London: Virago, 1988), 143.
[258] C, 'We Take It For All Women', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 109.
[259] D, 'What Right Have They Got?', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 129.

were not able to create a "separate sexual persona when off the clock".[260] While, therefore, some sex worker activists articulated challenges to contemporary understandings of sexual identity and women's sexuality, it is important to recognise that this was not a homogenous reality, and others framed their sex work as a representation of their sexuality, as their experiences of sexual acts meshed with understandings of sexual desire and emotional intimacy.

Although sex workers queered many contemporary understandings of sexuality, sexual desire, and sexual identities, their space for queer sexuality, queer sexual desire and queer sexual identities was limited. Their expansive discourses of sexuality fit within their exclusively gendered understanding of sex work. It is significant to note here, therefore, that the sex worker activist groups this thesis focuses on, reinforced, and perpetuated an explicitly (cis)gendered understanding of sex work and sex worker liberation. Thus, male and transgender sex worker perspectives are not included within their publications of testimonies, and their experiences, or involvement with this formal group-based activism is not prominent within the materials analysed in this thesis.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have analysed the testimonies of sex worker activists in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s. I argued that the discourses of sexuality which sex worker activists presented, at times, disputed normative claims of sexuality, disrupting the contemporary understandings as to how sexual acts related to sexual desire, and how sexual identities were formed in relation to both of these. Sex worker articulated a complex understanding of sex work and sexuality in which sexual desire, sexual acts, sexual relationships, and sexual identities were

[260] Heather Lee Miller, 'Trick Identities: The Nexus of Work and Sex', *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (2004): 146, https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2004.0018.

being consistently renegotiated. This is significant in how sex workers articulated their arguments that sex work was work and that it was women's work. Part of their activism was reclaiming and reformulating understandings of the constructions of both sexuality and work. By challenging conventional understandings of sex, sexuality and work, sex worker activists refuted the prostitute imaginary which was "driven by both fantasies and fears about sex" by challenging the discourses of sex, work, sexuality, and, thus, sex work.[261]

[261] Melissa Gira Grant, *Playing the Whore: The Work Sex Work* (London: Verso, 2014), 4.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS

This chapter will explore the role of transnationality in sex worker activism in the US, Britain, and France between 1973 and 1990. I will analyse the "transnationality" of sex worker activism in two ways: first, in the significance of transnational networks and exchange to sex worker activism; and second, in the way sex worker activists constructed transnational sex work. This follows from the work of Kempadoo and Doezema in *Global Sex Workers* in which both aspects of the "transnationality" of sex worker activism were highlighted.[262] I argue that transnationality was a crucial aspect of sex workers' rights activism in the US, Britain, and France. Yet, I critique the claims of sex worker activist groups of their activism being wholly "international" in scope as these groups were largely unreflective on transnational power dynamics or racial constructions of "the prostitute".

In section 5.1, I analyse the importance of transnationality to sex worker groups. My analysis will show that transnationality was important to sex worker activists and a significant aspect of their activism. In section 5.2, I interrogate the claims of sex worker activist groups to an "international" movement. Overwhelmingly, the transnationality of sex worker activism centred on Western Europe and North America. Based on my analysis, I will argue that many of the attempts to represent and forge a global pursuit of sex workers' rights in the 1980s represented a form of "neo-colonialism" through which sex workers in the US assumed their own framework and analysis as globally relevant. I use a definition of "neo-colonialism" which refers to, as scholars Clisby and Enderstein have defined it "the continued denomination of nations and peoples in the postcolonial context through economic and political structures of power", as opposed to the

[262] Kamala Kempadoo, 'Introduction: Globalizing Sex Workers' Rights', in *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*, ed. Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (New York: Routledge, 1998), 14.

explicit territorial acquisition significant to "colonialism".[263] Lastly, in section 5.3, I examine the extent to which sex worker activist groups in the US, Britain and France formulated their construction of sex work and the concept of sex trafficking through an imperial gaze. The term "imperial gaze" builds from Mary Louise Pratt's 1993 *Imperial Eyes* which highlighted the analysis of travellers as framed and seen through the white Western frameworks they held.[264] I utilise the term "imperial gaze" as scholar Kaplan has defined it: "a gaze structure which fails to understand that, as Edward Said phrases it, non-American peoples have integral cultures and lives that work according to their own, albeit different, logic".[265]

5.1: Dependence Across Borders

In this section, I explore the meaning of transnationality for sex worker activists. Sex worker activist groups built transnational networks of solidarity and exchanged experiences, theories and critiques of legislation and discourses around sex work. Newsletters of sex worker activist groups (namely the ECP, the US PROS, the PROS, COYOTE, and the NTFP), consistently highlighted the contemporary work of sex worker activists in different countries. In a 1977 bulletin of the British group the PROS, they cited the work of COYOTE in San Francisco and promoted the newsletter "COYOTE Howls" which, they argued, "uncovers exploitation by police and hotels" in the US.[266] Similarly, within "COYOTE Howls", a section "Around the World in Eighty Lays: From S.F to Rome" detailed sex workers' experiences and activism in many different cities and

[263] Suzanne Clisby and Athena-Maria Enderstein, 'Caught between the Orientalist–Occidentalist Polemic: Gender Mainstreaming as Feminist Transformation or Neocolonial Subversion?', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 2 (3 April 2017): 234, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2016.1258262.
[264] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), http://site.ebrary.com/id/10166527.
[265] E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 78.
[266] Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting, 'PROS Bulletin, No.1', April 1977, 1100/2/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, UK.

countries.[267] By highlighting the activism and experiences of sex workers in different countries, sex worker activists explicitly placed themselves within an ongoing transnational struggle for sex workers' rights. Groups also wrote pieces for one another's' newsletters and other publications. In a 1977 COYOTE newsletter, for example, PLAN and the ECP, both British sex worker activist groups, contributed separate pieces which argued for decriminalisation.[268] Helen Buckingham from the English sex worker activist group PLAN and Eileen McLeod from PROS wrote pieces in the NTFP newsletter in 1979 which evaluated sex workers' place within the Women's Movement.[269] Overwhelmingly, publications of the sex worker activist groups I focus on here either referenced the work or featured a contribution from members of a group overseas.

Transnationality was placed as an explicit goal and achievement of sex worker activism and formed how sex worker activists framed their own, local, groups. In an undated publication titled "Who are the ECP?" the ECP noted, "We have organised across national boundaries, helping to build a network of prostitutes' organisations which is an integral part of the international women's movement".[270] This publication, "Who are the ECP?", detailed the purpose of the ECP's sex worker activism and highlighted the achievements of the group. Thus, within this paper, the ECP positioned their role in "helping to build a network of prostitutes' organisations" as a central aspect of their identity, positionality, and success as an activist group. Further, a focus on their transnational activism worked to justify and link their own activism to an "international women's movement" in which the ECP situated themselves. Implicit within the ECP's framework was that

[267] E.g. Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 1', Spring 1978, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US; Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 2', 1978, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[268] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 4, Number 2', Autumn 1977, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[269] National Task Force on Prostitution, 'NTFP NEWS', October 1979, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[270] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Who Are the ECP?', n.d., ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

the discrimination of sex workers and women was not contained within national borders and that activist networks could address on a broader scale. This paper continued, "We have sister organisations in the USA… and work with prostitutes and prostitutes' organisations in Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Holland, Sweden, Brazil, and Australia".[271] The ECP situated themselves within a transnational exchange of sex worker activism and placed their role in transnational organising at the centre of their activism.

COYOTE and the NTFP similarly categorised transnational networks as an example of the "success" of their activism. In a June 1975 publication COYOTE detailed their second "accomplishment" (following the publication of their newsletter) as "Sister chapters in Seattle, New York, Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Diego, Mexico City, France…".[272] COYOTE also regularly produced updated files which provided contact information of their "Sister organizations" across the 1970s and 1980s which included groups within the US and abroad.[273] The ability to organise transnationality was depicted as a "success" or "accomplishment" to both the ECP and COYOTE. They posited transnational organising as an example *of* their activism through which they promoted the rights of sex workers.

The ECP and the US PROS constructed their theoretical analysis of sex work and sex workers' rights through transnational exchanges. In 1988, the US PROS and the ECP published a booklet titled "Prostitute Women and AIDS: Resisting the Virus of Repression".[274] Within this booklet, the US PROS and the ECP noted that the International Prostitutes' Collective (IPC)

[271] Ibid.
[272] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'Untitled', June 1975, 81-M32--90-M1-26, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[273] E.g. Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'Sister Organisations', c.1973-1977, 81-M32--90-M1-26, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[274] English Collective of Prostitutes and US PROStitutes Collective, 'Prostitute Women and AIDS: Resisting the Virus of Repression', 1988, ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

created their AIDS policy after they "exchanged experiences and continually discussed all the information available to any of us".[275] Transnational dialogue was depicted as crucial to forming analysis and demands for sex worker groups. Indeed, their AIDS policy, in this example, was situated as dependent on transnational networks. They explicitly developed their analysis and policy through transnational networks as they positioned the discrimination that sex workers faced as shared. Similarly, within the undated ECP publication "Who are the ECP?", they stated that networks of sex workers "made it possible to find out about each other's situation under different governments and types of legislation, whether 'prohibition' or 'legalisation'".[276] Here, the ECP argued that the exchange of experience and knowledge, specifically under different legal frameworks, helped develop their own analysis and positionality on sex work. Sex worker groups regarded transnational networks as significant in allowing them to construct and strengthen their arguments toward sex workers' rights, which relied on a range of national experiences and legal frameworks.

5.2: Western-Centrism in International Sex Worker Activism

The exchanges of experiences and the transnational networks which developed in the 1970s and 1980s were overwhelmingly between Western European and American groups. While groups framed sex worker activism as "international" in scope, there were specific limits to the internationalism of their activism. In this section, I analyse the limitations of the "internationality" of sex worker activism. I then focus on the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR)

[275] Ibid.
[276] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'Who Are the ECP?', n.d., ECP, Bishopsgate Institute, UK.

specifically. The ICPR was established in 1985 following the First World Whores' Conference held in Amsterdam and established by Margo St James and Gail Pheterson.[277]

The transnationality of sex worker activism centred around the US and Western Europe. COYOTE Howls' "Around the World" section highlighted the centrality of transnationality and the ability of individual groups' activism to reach beyond state and national borders for COYOTE. Yet, I argue that the "Around the "World" section highlights the unacknowledged Western-centrism of some sex worker activism. The "Around the World" section overwhelmingly included the activities of many different states in the US, Britain, and smaller discussions of other Western and Central European countries. For example, in the Spring 1978 newsletter, there was a short paragraph on Mexico, followed by lengthier discussions of Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and Paris.[278] In the Fall 1978 newsletter, only activities within the USA and Europe were discussed.[279] While this section of COYOTE's newsletter did not explicitly claim to provide readers with information from all areas, it is striking which countries were reached out to for contribution or which experiences of sex workers were discussed at length. Similarly, in the appendix of Jaget's 1980 *Prostitutes, Our Life*, the ECP argued the experiences of sex workers were the "same all over the world", yet their expansion of this argument included examples only from Western Europe and the US. They argued that "all the problems prostitute women face in France are faced also by prostitutes in England. The same is true for the US".[280] They continued that "in some states, like Nevada, as in some European Countries, like West Germany, prostitution

[277] Valerie Jenness, 'From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem', *Social Problems* 37, no. 3 (August 1990): 410, https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1990.37.3.03a00090.
[278] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 1', Spring 1978, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[279] Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, 'COYOTE HOWLS, Volume 5, Number 2', Fall 1978, 81-M32--90-M1-43, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[280] English Collective of Prostitutes, 'The Rules of the Game', in *Prostitutes, Our Life*, ed. Claude Jaget (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 205.

is legalised".[281] The ECP depicted sex worker discrimination as globally uniform ("all over the world") but this was informed by an analysis of the experiences of sex workers only in North America and Western Europe. It is striking that within these discussions, the category of the sex worker was largely homogenous.

The ICPR was formed in 1985 at the First World Whores Congress in Amsterdam. The First World Whores Congress was, as gender studies scholar Penny Weiss argued, "the result of years of local organizing and coalition building in many sites around the world".[282] This congress was organised by COYOTE/NTFP and members Margo St James and Gail Pheterson. At this Congress, the ICPR drafted the World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights (WCPR) and planned for the publication of a newsletter, the World Wide Whore's News (WWWNews). Criminologist Valerie Jenness argued in 1990 that the ICPR and World Charter were the culmination of the attempt to forge a collaborative international movement by Margo St James and Gail Pheterson and, thus, represented "COYOTE's international crusade".[283] Sex worker activists also acknowledged that the ICPR was led by COYOTE members and attempted to speak for sex workers globally. Pheterson posited in 1989 that the ICPR demonstrated "the commonality among prostitutes around the world".[284] Jenness used the term "crusade" positively, to describe the process through which COYOTE aimed to "redefine prostitution as a social problem".[285] The term "crusade" has a long history not least within histories of sex work in which it is usually associated with a "moral crusade against prostitution" seen within, for example, white slavery campaigns in the late nineteenth and

[281] Ibid.
[282] Penny A. Weiss, ed., *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader* (NYU Press, 2018), 302, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvf3w44b.
[283] Valerie Jenness, 'From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem', *Social Problems* 37, no. 3 (August 1990): 410, https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1990.37.3.03a00090.
[284] Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 259.
[285] Valerie Jenness, 'From Sex as Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem', *Social Problems* 37, no. 3 (August 1990): 403, https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1990.37.3.03a00090.

early twentieth centuries or, from the 1980s, in association with anti-trafficking campaigns.[286] Yet, it is also deeply related to colonial histories of territorial and cultural domination and acquisition.[287] Thus, while Jenness was uncritical of this term, I argue that the term "international crusade" is pertinent within the histories of the ICPR and the WCPR. The leaders of this "crusade" were Western European and American. As an "international crusade", I argue both the ICPR and the WCPR illustrated the Western-centrism and neo-colonial aspects which were embedded in COYOTE and the NTFP's sex worker activism in the 1980s.

As with other newsletters, the Western-centrism of the WWWNews is significant. This included "reports" from various countries. In the first newsletter, the WWWNews included contributions from Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, England, USA over four pages of the eleven-page newsletter.[288] In a separate section, the WWWNews included two short paragraphs on experiences of sex workers in Japan and Egypt in significantly less detail.

The ICPR was shaped by a liberal and US-centric understanding of "sex work", "sexuality" and "consent" under the leadership of COYOTE/NTFP members. For example, the 1985 World Charter stated that the ICPR's first demand was to "Decriminalize all aspects of adult prostitution resulting from individual decision".[289] Many of the position papers of COYOTE and the NTFP had similar conclusions around consent and sex work, such as an undated paper on sex worker

[286] E.g. Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Ronald Weitzer, 'The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade', *Politics & Society* 35, no. 3 (September 2007): 447–75, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329207304319.

[287] E.g. Livingstone M. Huff, 'The Crusades and Colonial Imperialism: Some Historical Considerations Concerning Christian-Muslim Interaction and Dialogue', *Missiology: An International Review* 32, no. 2 (April 2004): 141–48, https://doi.org/10.1177/009182960403200202.

[288] International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights, 'World Wide Whore's News, Volume 1, Number 1.', December 1985, 81-M32--90-M1-557, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

[289] Penny A. Weiss, ed., 'World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights: First World Whores' Congress; International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights; Amsterdam, Netherlands; February 1985', in *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader* (NYU Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvf3w44b.

legislation of the NTFP which argued "All sexual behaviour, in private, between consenting adults should be outside the purview of the law".[290] This analysis reflected the liberal perspective of COYOTE and the NTFP which centred "choice" and "privacy" in constructing sex work. This liberal perspective was significant especially within the context of the prominence of radical feminism in the US, as radical feminists and anti-trafficking activists argued that sex work "willingly entered into is as damaging as forced prostitution".[291] Situated within these debates, liberal sex worker activist groups such as COYOTE and the NTFP frequently distinguished sex work from "forced prostitution" to underline the consent and agency that sex workers had. The ICPR's charter replicated and reinforced a liberal framework of sex work which was built especially from COYOTE/ the NTFP's understandings of sex work. How sex work was framed within the ICPR's analysis, and how it was legitimised, was through a North American lens. Thus, while, certainly, the ICPR was based on liberal and American understandings of legitimate (and illegitimate) forms of sex work.

The World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights (WCPR) was published in February 1985 and set out the demands of the ICPR.[292] This charter called for decriminalisation and emphasised the human rights and civil liberties of sex workers.[293] Indeed, the WCPR included an entire section under the title 'Human Rights', and at the Second World Whores' Congress in Brussels in October 1986, the ICPR released a Statement on Prostitution and Human Rights. The Charter demanded the guarantee of "all human rights and civil liberties, including the freedom of speech, travel,

[290] National Task Force on Prostitution, 'Prostitution and the Constitution', n.d., 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[291] Kate Sutherland, 'Work, Sex, and Sex-Work: Competing Feminist Discourses on the International Sex Trade', *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 42, no. 1 (n.d.): 160.
[292] International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights, 'World Wide Whore's News, Volume 1, Number 1.', December 1985, 81-M32--90-M1-557, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[293] Chi Adanna Mgbako, 'The Mainstreaming of Sex Workers' Rights as Human Rights', *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 43 (2020): 98.

immigration, work, marriage, and motherhood" for sex workers.[294] A human rights framework was used by the ICPR to demand rights for sex workers globally. By adopting a human rights framework, sex worker activists reinforced a transnational analysis of sex work, that posited the discrimination of sex workers as similar within many different contexts despite differing legal frameworks around sex work. Further, they repositioned discussions around sex work not around the moral arguments that radical feminists continued to use around sex work but on whether or not a certain group of individuals could access "all human rights and civil liberties". Indeed, the ICPR published a Statement on Prostitution and Human Rights in October 1986. This Statement demanded "that prostitutes, ex-prostitutes and all women regardless of their work, color, class, sexuality, history of abuse or marital status be granted the same human rights as every other citizen".[295] The ICPR's adoption of a human rights framework represented the culmination of the prior decade of campaigning through which sex worker activists established that they were no different to "every other citizen" and the same as "all women".

According to law scholar Chi Adanna Mgbako, sex worker activists' utilisation of a human rights framework served as a "powerful feminist critique of whorephobia, the politics of rescue, and carceral feminism". I argue, however, that this utilisation of the concept of human rights only reinforced the Western framing that the ICPR represented and homogenised the construct of "prostitution".[296] Indeed, "the politics of rescue" were hardly *critiqued* within the ICPR's framework which defined sex work against sex trafficking and can be positioned as a "crusade" of Western Euro-American efforts. Feminist philosopher Ranjoo Seodu Herr has argued that human

[294] Penny A. Weiss, ed., 'World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights: First World Whores' Congress; International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights; Amsterdam, Netherlands; February 1985', in *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader* (NYU Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvf3w44b.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Chi Adanna Mgbako, 'The Mainstreaming of Sex Workers' Rights as Human Rights', *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 43 (2020): 136.

rights campaigns, and especially feminist human rights campaigns, "may replicate the imperialist stance of the colonial era and erode culturally diverse modes of gender justice in the Global South".[297] The experiences of those who sold sex in the Global South were not included in the ICPR's demands or critiques. During the Second World Whores Congress in 1986, the special session on human rights had testimonies which were overwhelmingly from the Global North and especially Europe. Of fifteen reports, four were from the Global South (Ecuador, India, Vietnam, Thailand), and eleven were from Western and Central Europe and North America. In Pheterson's 1989 *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores,* Pheterson provided a transcript of testimony from the human rights sessions of the Second World Whores' Congress. Within the fifty pages in which Pheterson recorded each of these testimonies, only eight and a half refer to testimonies from the Global South, a proportionally lower representation. Criticising the present-day "Women's Rights as Human Rights" movement, Seodu Herr argued that this fails to exemplify "transnational feminist solidarity", as it does not "represent the standpoint of marginalized/oppressed women in the Global South".[298] These same conclusions, I argue, can be drawn from the recourse to human rights for sex workers.

As noted, the ICPR predominantly focused on the west within their politics and activism. In a 1989 chapter titled "Reports and New Voices", Gail Pheterson expressed her hopes that the ICPR would expand beyond being "a young organisation which began in the West", stating that "In the coming months we expect to expand our network as we organise the next World Whores' Congress, a meeting which will prioritise the rights of sex workers from developing countries".[299] Yet, this third Congress never occurred and the activity of the ICPR declined at this point. In 1981,

[297] Ranjoo Seodu Herr, 'Women's Rights as Human Rights and Cultural Imperialism', *Feminist Formations* 31, no. 3 (2019): 118, https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2019.0033.
[298] Ibid, 136.
[299] Gail Pheterson, ed., *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989), 259.

Margo St James had already written that "the whores of Manila, as the ones in Bangkok, don't care much about the theories of the feminists in the developed countries".[300] Thus American sex workers were aware from the early 1980s that an "international crusade" was not wholly desired. that their theory and activism had little applicability beyond the Western context. The 1990s and 2000s have seen the rise of transnational sex worker activism within the Global South such as the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers, Red de Mujeres Trabajadores Sexuales de Latinoamerica y el Caribe (RedTraSex), and the African Sex Workers Alliance.[301] These groups represent collectives of many countries, more thoroughly expressing the diversity of sex trades which exist and do not claim to speak for or over those beyond their membership.

5.3: The Imperial Gaze

The use and perpetuation of colonial imagery in anti-trafficking campaigns, and the role of this within a neo-colonial framework, have been well documented. Kempadoo has argued that the construction of sex trafficking by anti-sex trafficking activists included colonial imagery "without shame", as women within the Global South were depicted as "incapable of self-determination".[302] Anti-trafficking activist groups emerged in the 1980s especially, such as the US-based Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), led by Kathleen Barry, which was established in 1988.[303]. Barry specifically relied on colonial imagery to further her activism, in which "vulnerable" women from the Global South were depicted as "victims" forced to sell sex for the profit of men.[304] As

[300] Margo St James, 'Letter from "Margo, Jennifer, et Al".', 5 March 1981, 81-M32--90-M1-546, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[301] Chi Adanna Mgbako, 'The Mainstreaming of Sex Workers' Rights as Human Rights', *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 43 (2020): 102.
[302] Kamala Kempadoo, 'Introduction: Globalizaing Sex Workers' Rights', in *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*, ed. Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (New York: Routledge, 1998).
[303] Charlotte Valadier, 'Migration and Sex Work through a Gender Perspective', *Contexto Internacional* 40, no. 3 (December 2018): 505, https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-8529.2018400300005.
[304] Nandita Sharma, 'Anti-Trafficking Rhetoric and the Making of a Global Apartheid', *NWSA Journal*, Autumn, 17, no. 3 (Autumn, 2005): 100.

gender studies scholar Jo Doezema has argued, anti-sex trafficking campaigns can be seen as reformulations of earlier narratives of "white slavery", "moral crusades" through which activists challenged definitions and legislation around sex work.[305] Further, Doezema has placed these campaigns as a form of neo-colonialism through which Western superiority and the need to "rescue" women in the Global South were established. In this section, I analyse how the liberal sex worker group the NTFP utilised imperial discourses to argue for the "choice" of sex work within Western states.

Similar to Barry's construction of sex trafficking, the NTFP's depiction of "forced prostitution" relied on and perpetuated imperialist discourses of women and sex workers in the Global South. In a discussion paper published in 1987 titled, "On Prostitution" by Priscilla Alexander, an entire page was devoted to outlining the reality of "Forced Prostitution". This paper highlighted that,

> technological western countries, where most women are at least functionally literate and there is a significant array of occupational choices, about 10 percent of women who work as prostitutes are coerced into prostitution by third parties through a combination of trickery and violence… At the other extreme, in India, where there is massive poverty with large numbers of people dying in the streets, and where there are few occupations open to women, 70-80 percent of the women who work as prostitutes are forced into the life.[306]

In discussions of "forced prostitution" the example given posits the United States and India as "extreme" opposites, in which "technological western countries" offer the best conditions for women, in contrast to India in which people die on the streets and women have no, or limited, agency. Through this depiction, the NTFP framed "forced" or "coerced" prostitution as something which was significantly more common in the Global South (or beyond "technological western

[305] Jo Doezema, 'Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-Emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women', *Gender Issues* 18, no. 1 (December 1999): 23–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-999-0021-9.

[306] National Task Force on Prostitution and Priscilla Alexander, 'On Prostitution', February 1987, 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.

countries"). This depiction fits with the arguments of postcolonial scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty on the construction of the "third world woman" by Western feminists.[307] Mohanty argued that, within certain feminist depictions the "third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being "third world" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc)".[308] These constructions can be seen within the NTFP's depictions which drew on the "poverty", literacy, occupation options which were all highlighted as limiting the agency Indian women were afforded.[309] This fits Mohanty's assertions that Western feminism can erase "the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes". Such descriptions constructed the "third world woman".

Further, Mohanty argued that it is through the construction of the "third world woman" that Western feminists were able to create the "(singular and privileged) first world" through a binary analytic.[310] India was depicted by the NTFP as the "extreme" opposite to "technological western countries". The NTFP's discussion of forced prostitution was expanded with the assertion that "In India, young girls are sometimes sold by their parents to traders, allegedly for service to the "goddess," but actually for work in brothels in major cities".[311] Mohanty has argued that radical and liberal feminist depictions of the "Third World" were partly used to implicitly uphold "Western women as secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives".[312] The NTFP's

[307] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 353, https://doi.org/10.2307/302821.
[308] Ibid, 337.
[309] National Task Force on Prostitution and Priscilla Alexander, 'On Prostitution', February 1987, 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[310] Ibid.
[311] National Task Force on Prostitution and Priscilla Alexander, 'On Prostitution', February 1987, 81-M32--90-M1-33, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, US.
[312] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 353, https://doi.org/10.2307/302821.

construction of the Global South explicitly was predicated upon the superiority of a (Western) secular society for the control which women had over their own lives which Mohanty argued was a significant aspect of the discursive self-presentation of Western feminists.[313] The NTFP's arguments followed this framework, as the construction of sex work in India was used to reinforce the freedom and choice that Western women were afforded and absolve Western sex workers, within this context, from charges of sex trafficking.

Doezema argued in 2001 that depictions of sex workers in the Global South utilised by anti-trafficking activists served to contrast between the "liberated" woman and the oppressed and becomes the "image of sexually subordinated womanhood".[314] While Doezema analysed the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), these same colonial divisions and understandings of women in the Global South are recognisable in the work of the NTFP. As Doezema highlighted, these constructions of women in the Global South were not new. Rather, these constructions can be seen as reformulations of understandings of sex work, innocence, and gender "established by over a century of feminist, abolitionist and colonialist discourse".[315] The dichotomised depiction of sex workers in the Global North and the Global South was not based on the incorporation of standpoints from a diverse range of countries. The NTFP's construction of sex trafficking relied on, constructed and reinforced colonial understandings of gender in the Global South through which divisions between the Global North and Global South were discursively maintained.

Conclusion:

[313] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 353, https://doi.org/10.2307/302821.
[314] Jo Doezema, 'Ouch!: Western Feminists' "Wounded Attachment" to the "Third World Prostitute"', *Feminist Review*, no. 67 (2001): 32.
[315] Ibid, 33.

In this chapter, I have analysed the significance of "transnationality" to sex worker activism in the US, Britain, and France between 1973 and 1990. I have argued that transnationality was a central aspect of sex worker activism. Yet, as sex worker activists explicitly attempted to universalise their demands in the 1980s, these were often formed from and through the experiences of women in the West who sold sex. How sex worker activist groups situated themselves within broader debates around not only sex work but feminism and trafficking as well as how they acknowledged their colonial and racial histories is significant. There were similarities between groups as they focused their work, which claimed to be international, on Western countries. There was, for example, limited inclusion of sex workers from Eastern Europe the Global South in sex worker activists' transnational networks.

By focusing on the NTFP, an American liberal sex worker group, I have also argued that some Western sex worker activists were involved in the construction of sex work and sex trafficking that represented and perpetuated a form of neo-colonialism. Not only was a colonial gaze embedded within and perpetuated through their work, but through which they spoke over and for other countries, assuming a global category of the sex worker and relevant activism around this.

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I have analysed the ways sex worker activist groups produced and challenged discourses of sexual labour, the "prostitute" and sexuality in the USA, Britain, and France between 1973 and 1990. I have examined the ways sex worker activists constructed sexual labour, the sex worker and sexuality. This thesis centred on the discursive contribution of sex worker activists and also situated this activism within a transnational framework.

The goal of this thesis was to unpick how sex worker activists in the US, Britain and France constructed sexual labour, the sex worker and sexuality. To answer this question, I have analysed the discourses which sex worker activists used in their activist works.

I used two theoretical frameworks to analyse my sources. First, that of sex workers as producers of feminist knowledge. By framing my thesis through the lens of feminist standpoint theory, I hoped to underscore the significance of sex worker activist writings as a form of feminist knowledge production on sexual labour and sexuality. Second, I utilised Gira Grant's concept of the "prostitute imaginary".[316] This was a pertinent theoretical framework for this thesis. Gira Grant defined the "prostitute imaginary" as "the ways in which we conceptualize and make arguments about prostitution".[317] Through this, Gira Grant emphasised the active process of the construction of discourses of and around sex work. Thus, I argue the "prostitute imaginary" was exactly what sex worker activists hoped to abolish through their activism and through the discursive choices they made in constructing sexual labour and sexuality.

Archival materials of the groups involved, alongside one documentary filmed at the Occupation of St Nizier Church in 1975 in Lyon, France, were the sources I used to write this

[316] Melissa Gira Grant, *Playing the Whore: The Work Sex Work* (London: Verso, 2014).
[317] Ibid.

thesis. My analysis of these materials led to the following findings and allowed me to make the following arguments:

In Chapter Three, I have shown that sex worker activists refuted the construction of "the prostitute" through new discourses of sexual labour. Specifically, I focused on how sex worker activists reconstructed "the prostitute" in specific ways: as a worker and as a mother. I showed that sex worker activists' utilisation of these discourses was not always uniform, yet their criticism of "the prostitute" was. Yet, I also found that sex worker activists' analysis of the discrimination of sex workers always centred gender but placed race within a more ambiguous position in their analysis. Sex worker activists' similarities and differences around approaches of labour, sexual labour and race converged within their approach to sex trafficking. My finding that sex worker activists refuted the construction of "the prostitute" through new discourses of sexual labour is a contribution to the existing literature on sex worker activism in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s. The existing literature frequently analyses the material changes to sex work legislation and for sex workers' lives that sex worker activism has contributed to. In contrast, this chapter centred on the published works of sex worker activists specifically to consider the discursive challenges to sexual labour sex worker activism provided.

Chapter Four analysed the ways in which sex worker activists disrupted conventional constructions of sexuality and sexual identity. Within this chapter, I focused predominantly on published works of sex worker activists in which individual members of activist groups detailed their own perspectives on sexuality. I argued that the discursive construction of "sexuality" from sex worker activists in the US, Britain, and France in the 1970s and 1980s fits Doan's notion of

the importance of histories centred on "defamiliarizing and destabilizing categories of [sexual] identity".[318]

Lastly, in Chapter Five, I have explored the transnational dimension of sex worker activism. This chapter shows that, through transnational networks, sex worker activists formed and sharpened their analysis of sex work and the discrimination sex workers faced. In this chapter, I also highlighted the limits to the transnationality of sex worker activism in the US, Britain, and France which overwhelmingly privileged sex worker activism within the Global North. This was reflected in my analysis of many groups who claimed their experiences to be global. In addition to arguing that transnationality was an important component of their activism, within this chapter, I also argued that certain sex worker activist groups' construction of transnational sex work evinced patterns of neo-colonialism which scholars have documented in other feminist approaches to sex trafficking.[319]

Throughout the entire thesis, I hoped to draw attention to the range of approaches which sex worker activists took in their construction and analysis of sexual labour. Sex worker activists, broadly, aimed to deconstruct, critique, and alter the "prostitute imaginary". Yet, the discursive choices they made to do so were not uniform.

This thesis, of course, has limitations and areas within this research that could be expanded by considering other key aspects of sex worker activism. A crucial limitation was a lack of sources that related to sex worker activism in the 1980s in France. The Centre Grisélidis Réal potentially

[318] Laura L. Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 58.

[319] E.g. Jo Doezema, 'Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-Emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women', *Gender Issues* 18, no. 1 (December 1999): 23–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-999-0021-9; Kamala Kempadoo, 'Introduction: Globalizing Sex Workers' Rights', in *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*, ed. Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (New York: Routledge, 1998); Jo Doezema, 'Now You See Her, Now You Don't: Sex Workers at the UN Trafficking Protocol Negotiation', *Social & Legal Studies* 14, no. 1 (March 2005): 61–89, https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663905049526.

holds relevant materials which could be used to further explore the activism of French sex workers in greater detail in the 1980s. This centre was closed during the period when I conducted archival research and items were not digitised. Future research could utilise these to strengthen, challenge or build from the conclusions I have drawn. There were, also, significant themes within sex worker activism which I did not draw upon or analyse. The scope of discussions could be expanded to include, for example, how sex worker activists responded to and situated themselves within debates over pornography. Finally, I included only sex worker activist groups who focused exclusively on sexual labour within their work. This study could be broadened to include, for example, AIDS activist groups that organised around sex work. This would also offer an analysis of male sex work or transgender sex work which, as noted in the introduction, the sex worker organisations I have studied excluded.

Discursive Interventions and Transnational Networks of Sex Workers: Britain, France, and the US between 1973 and 1990 joins a recent wave of historical studies on sex worker activism in the 1970s and 1980s. By utilising a transnational approach and emphasising the plurality of sex worker activism I hope to contribute to this field. This thesis aimed to demonstrate the various ways sex worker activists critiqued the "prostitute imaginary" in the US, Britain, and France between 1973 and 1990. By analysing the works of sex worker activists, this thesis recognised sex worker activists as crucial contributors to the history of feminist perspectives on sex work and sexuality in the 1970s and 1980s.

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