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Madonna or Whore? Representations of prostitution in contemporary British news media

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Abstract

This thesis explores representations of consensual adult sexual labour within British newspapers *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. Through an analysis of framing methods informed by the theoretical perspectives of intersectional and postcolonial feminist theory and news media framing, the paper seeks to identify that which contributes towards the dominant representations of particular forms of sex work. It also seeks to position such representations within wider socio-cultural frameworks of reference.

An exploration of the ways sex worker voices are utilised contributes to this analysis, through an application of theory surrounding source influence and representation. The thesis then seeks to ask: does the framing of sex workers as it is found within each newspaper produce more or less ‘acceptable’ forms of sex work? And if so, what are the conditions attached to such acceptability?

This paper takes a methodological approach of interpretive framing analysis informed by an epistemological perspective of standpoint feminism. An adaptation of Matthes and Kohring’s (2008) framing analysis method is used for the main analytical process, with the analysis of sex worker voices having emerged from an application of theory.

The analysis results indicate the ways in which *The Daily Mail* produces ‘acceptable’ sex work through capitalist understandings of economic productivity. Sex workers are framed in *The Mail* across existing structures of oppression such as gender, race and class, as those who work indoors are afforded a leniency that outdoors-workers are not. Framings within *The Guardian* are less overtly presented through valuations of the work itself, and are more focused on the wider impacts of policy. However, articles by anti-prostitution campaigners provide a dominant framing of prostitution as gendered oppression.

The outcomes of this research have shown sex work to be framed most consistently through its positioning in relation to existing structures of social or cultural hierarchy. This thesis argues that prostitution is, in each context, constituted through a set of assumed beliefs which are fundamentally connected to perceptions of sex, class-based tropes of social hierarchy and a colonial tendency to exploit those considered to be socially vulnerable through a discursive guise of protection.

Keywords

Prostitution, Postcolonial feminism, Intersectional feminism, Framing theory, News media, News values

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1.0 Introduction and Background

This thesis explores mediated representations of consensual adult prostitution as they are constructed in British news media. The aim is to identify and critically examine the ways in which *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* newspapers construct representations of the sex industry and those working in it, and utilise sex worker voices in representing discourse.

Over the course of this introductory chapter I identify the socio-cultural positioning of sex work, drawing upon historical conceptualisations that contribute to contemporary representations. As well as exploring the position of sex work, this chapter explores the UK news mediascape, positioning *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail* within a wider context of British news media production and politics.

As researcher I approach this project from a fundamental perspective of sex workers' rights—a position I explore in my literature review. Through this thesis, I intend to produce knowledge that will contribute towards understanding the stigmatisation of particular forms of sexual labour, and the way stigma is perpetuated through mediated discourse. My exploration of existing academic research provides context for my later analysis and helps identify gaps in research.

In the chapters following I outline my theoretical framework and research methodology. My choice of theory emerges from the fields of media production and representation, and is supported by postcolonial and intersectional feminist theory. My methodology involves an adapted framing analysis method, informed by Matthes and Kohring (2008).

The questions guiding this thesis are as follows:

- 1) How does each newspaper frame sex work and the workers themselves through mediated discourse around prostitution in the UK?
- 2) In what ways are sex worker voices utilised as sources in the selected content?

- 3) From a postcolonial and intersectional feminist perspective, does each newspaper attach conditions to more or less acceptable forms of sex work through such framing and utilisation of voices?

These questions were strongly informed by my exploration of literature and choice of theory. A wider contextualisation to the questions is provided in section 4.1 of my methodology chapter.

1.1 Contextualising the prostitute figure

As identified in Gerda Lerner's (1986), the historic development of prostitution can be seen in an examination of its relationship "to the sexual regulation of all women in archaic states" (1986 cited in Agustin, 2007:99). The social positioning of the prostitute and indeed *any* woman, has throughout history been informed by fears around the villainous or corrupting potential of female sexual transgression.

In her historical analysis of the prostitute as a social figure, Laura Agustin (2007) cites an English decree from 921 - 939 AD, requiring that

certain wrongdoers be banished or killed, among these wizards, sorcerers, perjurers , conspirators to murder and 'vile, polluted, notorious *horewenan*', a word comprising whores, fornicators and adulterers.

Agustin, 2007:99

The corrupting potential of the whore is similarly pointed to by Adrian Streete (2017) who identifies the way the biblical *Whore of Babylon* figure was adopted in seventeenth century theatrical and visual culture to symbolise the corruption of faith. As Streete describes, the presence of the Whore "even as a negative representation, is dangerous: there is always the potential of seduction to the 'false' religion" (Streete, 2017: np).

Dichotomous representations have historically displayed the prostitute as both seducer and as putrid disease-carrier. Sophie Carter (2004) describes the way in which prostitution in eighteenth century

London was considered “an incontrovertible transgression... of the very order of femininity itself” with female promiscuity described as *generative* of disease (Carter, 2004:21,23). The ‘wrong’ kind of female sexual behaviour is in this case constituted as a threat, with the prostitute figure paradoxically held “as both the anathema and the very paradigm of the feminine” (2004:22).

A process of social intervention in The Victorian era saw the bourgeoisie set out to rescue those they considered unable to help themselves through allegations of ‘white slavery’ (Agustin, 2007:96; McLaughlin 1991:251; Doezema, 1999:24). Through grounding the argument in discourses of slavery, the Victorian campaign produced prostitution as a site of “irrefutable injury”, establishing the necessary role of the saving figure (Doezema, 1999:23). An understanding of this movement, described by Agustin as the ‘Rescue Industry’, is key to my analytical process and will be explored later through the operationalization of postcolonial feminist theory.

Beyond the moralism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, later understandings were borne of issues around labour and gender equality through contentious debate within the iterative feminist movements. During the mid-twentieth century, the second wave feminist movement, often linked with radical feminism, sought to liberate women from socio-economic inequality and dismantle hegemonic understandings of gender (Aspevig, 2011:58). Aspevig (2011) describes the way in which second wave feminism conceptualized prostitution as a product of gender inequality, symbolising women’s sexual servitude to men (2011:59).

In the 1980s, the emergence of pro-sex feminism prompted heated debate in a period that has been described as *The Sex Wars*. Pro-sex feminist thought is often placed in antithesis to radical feminism, in the way it challenges the assertion that all sexual practices are constructed in relation to patriarchy (Peluso, 2009:3). Pro-sex feminists rejected the term ‘prostitute’ in favour of ‘sex work’ on the grounds that the former was connotative of shame or wrongdoing, and the latter more representative of the labour involved (Bernstein, 2007:11).

1.2 The UK Mediascape

In his analysis of the British Press, Mike Temple (2008) cites an episode of BBC sitcom *Yes Prime Minister* in which the readerships of British national newspapers are, as Temple describes, “gently lampooned” (2008:190):

The Guardian is read by people who think they ought to run the country. *The Times* is read by the people who actually do run the country. *The Daily Mail* is read by the wives of the people who run the country. *The Financial Times* is read by the people who own the country. *The Morning Star* [a communist paper] is read by people who think the country ought to be run by another country. *The Daily Telegraph* is read by people who think it is. [And] *Sun* readers don't care who runs the country as long as she's got big tits.

BBC, 1986 cited in Temple, 2008:190

This excerpt speaks to the deeply seated correlations between newspaper reading and social class in the UK. Speaking some thirty years on, Temple points to the fact that even today all UK newspapers are aware of their readership cutting across social class and political partisanship (Temple, 2008:190). This strongly rooted division is important to note for the purpose of my research. When considering each newspaper's discourse, it will be important to consider: who are they writing for?

Kevin Williams (2009) makes a similar point, identifying the strong relationship between newspaper reading and social class (2009:np). Whilst the middle and upper classes are generally associated with *up-market* or *broadsheet* newspapers, *mid-market tabloids* are associated with those from a lower socio-economic background (ibid). An increased popularity of tabloid style newspapers has sparked a process known as *tabloidization*, wherein content has shifted “away from information and analysis and towards sensational copy focusing on scandal, celebrities and popular entertainment” (Williams, 2009:np).

Following on from a 2011 discourses analysis of discussions around prostitution in the *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* by Kristen Aspevig, I have decided to similarly use these two papers for my own analysis. I will now briefly explain the position of each, in the wider UK news mediascape.

1.2.1 The Daily Mail

The Daily Mail is the dominant mid-market tabloid newspaper in the UK, its readership forming a significant concentration of the UK population known as ‘middle England’—a socio-political grouping referring to the lower and middle classes. In his book *Class in Britain*, David Cannadine (2000) describes middle England as “a metaphor for respectability, the nuclear family, heterosexuality, conservatism, whiteness, middle age and the status quo” (2000:np).

Cannadine’s conceptualisation of ‘middle England’ is reflected in Temple’s (2008) description of *Daily Mail* discourse, as

/.../ ‘for Britain and against Europe’, ‘against welfare and for standing on your own feet’, pro private sector, pro marriage and the traditional family and unequivocally for ‘traditional values’

Temple, 2008:90

The Mail has traditionally been a supporter of the Conservative party with an ideology that is heavily critiqued by the liberal and politically-left leaning population (Temple, 2008; Addison, 2017). In his post-Brexit novel *Mail Men*, Adrian Addison (2017) describes *The Mail* as “almost single-handedly scaring half of the electorate into taking Britain out of the European Union”, going on to claim that the newspaper itself helped create the conditions for Brexit to happen (2017:2).

1.2.2 The Guardian

The Guardian is known broadly as a politically left-of-centre newspaper and one of the four key ‘serious’ or ‘quality’ broadsheet newspapers in the UK (Temple, 2008:190). Temple describes *The Guardian* as ‘unremittingly liberal’, with a strong readership of Labour party supporters and

professionals in the public sector (2008:89). Alan Rusbringer, former *Guardian* Editor described the newspaper's journalistic values as: “[I]ndependent of ownership, behaviour and belief... There should be a high premium on transparency, collaboration and open discussion” (Forgan, n.d. Cited in Singer & Ashman, 2009:5).

In 2006 *The Guardian* launched its' *Comment is Free* section in a reaction to the growth of the online blogging movement. *Comment is Free* includes the writing of print columnists, guest commentators and contributors, with the aim of providing “an open-ended space for debate, dispute, argument and agreement” (guardian.co.uk, n.d., cited in Singer & Ashman, 2009:5).

2.0 Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to explore existing literature and arguments pertinent to the themes outlined in the introductory part of this thesis. Theory surrounding my discussion will be explored in the following chapter, but this section will provide a grounding for my later analysis.

I begin this chapter by looking at some arguments for media as a framer of sex work. Whilst a theoretical approach to media framing will be taken further in chapter 3.0, this initial overview will provide a basis for the later theoretical exploration. I then provide an overview of some of the dominant mediated framings of sex workers. I conclude this chapter by exploring notions of stigma and legitimised erotic labour, gaining an initial understanding of the antecedents leading to sex worker representation.

Discussions throughout my selected literature are contextualised within New Zealand, UK and USA news media and public policy. Identifying approaches and discourses within various legislative environments provides a helpful point of departure for considering where gaps exist in UK-focused literature.

2.1 Media as framer

As an individual typically hidden from public sight, I am interested in exploring ways that the prostitute is produced through mediated discourse. Thinking about media as a framer of cultural phenomena is helpful in considering whether the sex workers' hidden status affords the media a greater depth of sensationalist interpretation.

Ronald Weitzer (2005:934) argues that sex industry knowledge is contaminated by ideology more pervasively than any other area of the social sciences, with figures skewed by unrepresentative samples, political biases and personal opinion (Weitzer, 2005:939). This is a helpful starting point in considering the ways in which sex work is framed by the media—as Weitzer goes on to describe,

information found in published reports is often unquestioningly reproduced within newspaper reports (Weitzer, 2005:938).

Hallgrímssdóttir, Phillips and Benoit (2006) provide a similar perspective in their comparison of media representations of sex workers and self-reported accounts by the workers themselves. Using the concept of media framing, the authors point to the ways that the media inform, educate and entertain consumers whilst reflecting social worlds “with varying accuracy and truth” (Hallgrímssdóttir et al, 2006:265).

For both Weitzer and Hallgrímssdóttir et al. there seems to be a disparity between mediated representations of sex work and the lived experience of workers. This separation is suggestive of a representational deficiency, wherein discourse is lead by social actors outside of the sex working community. To start from this point I can then begin to consider who is leading the conversation, and how is the prostitute figure being constructed if not by prostitutes themselves.

This symbolic dissonance of representation is reflected in what Melissa Gira Grant (2014) has coined the ‘prostitute imaginary’. Grant describes the prostitute imaginary as “a powerful yet lazy composite” which becomes “a stand-in for all sex workers, a reduction of their work and lives to one fantasy of a body and its particular and limited performance” (Grant, 2014:20,102). Within this context, the sex worker is related to primarily through her performed sexuality. This focus on the act of sex itself speaks to the process of tabloidisation, with prurient discussions of sex and erotic performance feeding into a consumer desire for scandal and entertainment.

Speaking about reportage of Asian sex workers in New Zealand, Gwyn Easterbrook-Smith identifies the way in which New Zealand media position older Chinese sex workers as manipulative and dangerous, thus carrying and relying upon established xenophobic narratives (2018:134). This point makes suggestion to other possible factors contributing to the prostitute imaginary composite. In my use of the prostitute imaginary as an emblematic figure, it is important to take an intersectional perspective to the analysis of such representations. It will be helpful to consider the wider context into which media texts are being produced, and whether framings are emergent from concerns about the sex industry in particular, or are reflecting wider cultural biases.

It could be said that Grant's prostitute imaginary provides a metarepresentation of the sex worker: she acts as the resonant frame through which outside actors can tell the story of the prostitute. Existing as she does above specific symbolic representation, it is helpful to gain a more nuanced understanding of particular framings. Easterbrook-Smith identifies how academic texts around the representation of sex work often conclude that news media constructs sex work as a social problem in need of fixing (2018:40). My own reading has produced similar conclusions, so I therefore use the following section to explore two framings in particular that both lend themselves to a 'prostitution' discourse. Following this I explore a 'sex work' approach, and look at the nature of work itself with an analysis of Marxist-feminist approaches to sexual labour.

2.2 Framing the prostitute

Kantola and Squires (2002) identify 'public nuisance' and 'innocent victim' as the two dominant discourses around sex work in British media. These discourses, as the authors explain, are connected to two distinct debates around the sex industry: that of kerb crawling, in which the prostitute is considered a public nuisance, and trafficking for sex in which she is characterised as an innocent victim (2002:3).

A key distinction must be drawn here between 'migration for sex work' and 'sex trafficking'. As Charlotte Valadier (2018) points out, there is a tendency for the two to be conflated as the result of "a moral and conservative perspective that considers prostitution invariably a form of exploitation" (Valadier, 2018:502). In her book *Transnational Prostitution*, Susanne Thorbek (2002) similarly discusses the difficulty in distinguishing between who is trafficked and who is not. Outlining the difference in circumstances of migrant prostitutes, Thorbek highlights the complex role of individual choice before entering into the industry, and after starting the work (2002:1,5). For the purpose of this thesis I will not seek to fully untangle the specificities around this (important) debate, however it is necessary to keep in mind the somewhat interchangeable nature of the two terms as they are produced in discourse.

The element of perceived choice, as identified by Thorbek, contributes a useful parameter to my analysis of migrant workers. Jo Doezema (1998) identifies the positioning of choice in sex worker representation through what she describes as the ‘forced/voluntary dichotomy’ (1998:np). Through categorising sex workers as “guilty/‘voluntary’ and innocent/‘forced’”, Doezema explains, beliefs around the punishment of women who transgress sexual norms are reinforced (ibid).

Doezema identifies the way in which characterisations of the forced sex worker will emerge through the construction of a ‘third world prostitute’, “presented as backward, innocent, and above all helpless” (Doezema, 2001:31). Doezema argues that feminist interests are advanced through the powerful construction of a third world trafficking victims’ ‘injured body’, producing the prostitute as a damaged ‘other’ (2001:17,16). In its implicit positioning of a required ‘helper’, this construction evokes Agustin’s notion of the Rescue Industry. This construction is key to my analysis, especially when considering the framing of European migrant workers in the UK.

The concept of *pornotroping*, coined by Hortense Spillers (1987) as a term to describe the simultaneous ‘othering’ and sexualisation of the captive slave body, is also evoked here. Spillers describes the way in which, in a coalescence of violence and sexuality, the captive body is produced as the source of “irresistible, destructive sensuality” whilst being “reduced to a thing, becoming *being for the captor*” (1987:67). Spillers theorises the notions of “flesh” and “body” as representative of captive/liberated subject-positions; as she describes, discursive productions of the captive slave display an enduring reliance on ‘flesh’ as a primary narrative (ibid). This focus on the body, through its victimising/sexualising discourse of dominance and subordination, is both reflective of the ‘injured body’ conceptualisation, and the historical co-option of slavery terminology in feminist discourses on prostitution.

Whilst the innocent victim and public nuisance framings are both reflective of ‘prostitution’ discourse, there exists varying perspectives within the ‘sex work’ debate. Speaking about the sex workers’ rights movement in their book *Revolting Prostitutes*, Juno Mac and Molly Smith (2018) identify the way that some activists vehemently defend the sexually empowered prostitute whilst others conceptualise the debate as primarily one of workers’ safety and labour rights (Mac & Smith, 2018:69).

Conversely, Shannon Bell (1994) describes prostitute-led discourse as involving dichotomous representations of empowerment and victimisation (1994:99). Although identifying three dominant prostitute-led discourses of the time as sex workers' rights, pro-abolition and Prostitutes Anonymous, only the sex workers' rights movement was represented by those currently working in the industry. An important distinction is raised here around who is considered part of the prostitute community: as Mac and Smith point out, the harrowing testimonies of former prostitutes are used frequently by anti-prostitution activists, but the difference between current and former sex workers "is fundamental not because of identities, but because of the material conditions of those who sell and trade sex" (Mac and Smith, 2018:36,84).

Shannon Bell (1999) identifies the concern with empowerment for prostitutes in patriarchal and capitalist society (Bell, 1994:99). The empowered prostitute "is constructed as healer rather than disease producer, as educator rather than degenerate, as sex expert rather than deviant, as business woman rather than commercial object" (Bell,1994:100). This description, framing the prostitute as a sexually generous individual, can be problematic in its reflection of class-based hierarchies of privilege. As Mac and Smith point out, 'happy hooker' narratives result in the invisibilization and stigmatisation of sex workers who live in poverty or fear of police violence (Mac and Smith, 2018:76). Bernstein (2007) similarly laments 'happy hooker' discourse, identifying the ways such narratives emerge from the privileged position of white, middle-class sex workers who will invariably work indoors (Bernstein, 2007:77).

Mac and Smith (2018) argue that contemporary arguments for sex workers' rights have seen a shift away from the 'happy hooker' frame and towards a Marxist-feminist approach (Mac & Smith, 2018:36). Within a Marxist perspective, prostitution is exploitative in the same way as selling all embodied labour is exploitative: the employment contract itself is *always* a contract of prostitution (Marx, 1975, cited in Bell 1994:78). As Canadian writer and sex worker Sarah M. (2012) explains:

[T]o call sex work degrading...is to deny that all jobs are degrading...Conversely, that these jobs are degrading doesn't automatically make sex work empowering. It just makes it unexceptional.

'M'. cited in Frase, 2012

Their Marxist approach lies in critique of both the abolitionist perspective of prostitution as fundamentally exploitative, as well as the libertarian view of sex work as an empowering form of self-expression (Frase, 2012). A final alternative sex worker perspective is found through the writing of Easterbrook-Smith, with an exploration of the stigma and perceived un/acceptability of different forms of sexual labour. I will now explore literature around these themes in order to gain an understanding of the factors contributing to the stigmatisation and legitimisation of such work.

2.3 Stigma and acceptability

Investigating the stigmatised position of the prostitute requires the identification of stigma and subordination associated with gender. As described by Shannon Bell (1994), the prostitute is “the other of the other”, the other within the categorical other of the subordinate female (1994:2). To start from this point helps build an image of the prostitute from the ground up: as a woman, whether cis or trans, and then as a sex worker. For trans workers, for example, stigma will be produced through sexism, cissexism and transphobia, in an intersection of discrimination which Easterbrook-Smith identifies as ‘transmisogyny’ (Easterbrook-Smith, 2018:57).

Grant (2014) describes the social valuation of female legitimacy and virtue as “whore stigma”, identifying the way in which stigma is attached not only to prostitutes but to all forms of “illegitimate or illicit femaleness” (Pheterson 1996, cited in Grant 2014:138). This notion is reflective of early conceptualisations of feminine transgression as identified in the introductory part of this thesis, and evokes what is popularly known as the madonna/whore divide: the deviant and immoral ‘whore’ is set apart from her chaste ‘Madonna’ counterpart in an ongoing categorization of women as inherently ‘good’ or ‘bad’ (Grant 2017:13; Mclaughlin 1991:249; Sanders et al 2009:2).

When reflecting on the ‘happy hooker’ discourse, Easterbrook-Smith argues that an acceptable model of sex work, as presented by the media, is predicated on the perceived agency and enjoyment of the individual worker, in a reflection of neoliberal demands on workers to enjoy the work that they do (2018:2,39). Similarly, Elizabeth Bernstein (2007b) identifies an emergent ‘respectability’ of sexual

commerce coming from a new class of individuals participating in sex work (2007b:474). The relationship between capitalist mainstreaming of sex work with a perceived acceptability of the worker was recurrent throughout the texts I studied.

Easterbrook-Smith argues that mediated representations of different types of sex work “reinforce existing axis of oppression and hierarchical structures”, legitimising some forms of labour over others (Easterbrook-Smith, 2018:191). Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young (2006) identify what they describe as a gendered, racialized and class-based economy of news media representation that privileges some women over others (2006: 902,912). The emphasis of this point is placed on the dichotomous nature of such representations:

Just as the “good” woman is contrasted with the “bad” woman, so the racialized body is contrasted with the dominant, White body, wherein one occupies the spotlight of crime, whereas the other is seen as inhabiting the law-abiding shadow of the dominant society.

Jiwani and Young, 2006:902

This binary of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ permeates academic discussion on sex worker representations, emerging through the categorisation of white and non-white workers, those who work indoors versus outdoors and those whose labour is considered voluntary versus involuntary. As identified throughout this review, the categories of distinction seem to frequently fall around that which is perceived as acceptable within wider structures of capitalist hierarchy; it is therefore important for my analysis to examine these intersecting points, bringing into account the context into which frames are produced.

Whilst notions of legitimacy and acceptability in a New Zealand context are explored in detail by Gwyn Easterbrook-Smith, there is no such equivalent analysis from within the UK in recent years. Kristen Aspevig’s 2011 paper provides a detailed exploration of competing discourses, but a lack of detail around the represented sex workers results in a somewhat unhelpful homogenisation of the sex worker community. Although Aspevig begins the identification of sex worker voices as news sources, there is an identifiable gap in contemporary literature surrounding the framing of sex work by British news media, offering an opportunity for my research to contribute new information to the field.

3.0 Theoretical framework

The theoretical field of exploration for this thesis lies in the landscapes of media representation and media production. My framework has emerged from following that of Easterbrook-Smith's (2018) thesis on sex worker representation in New Zealand news media. Taking departure from Easterbrook-Smith's approach, I sought theoretical discussions that help explain the prevalence and recurrence of particular depictions of sex work.

I begin this section by exploring framing theory, outlining a multiparadigmatic approach as informed by Entman (1993) and D'Angelo (2002). I go on to explore theory around news values as they are identified by Galtung and Ruge (1973), and Harcup and O'Neill (2001).

Easterbrook-Smith's (2018) choice of theoretical framework is partly contextualised to conditions in New Zealand. This led me to consider: what conditions are particular to UK policy and culture? The readings illustrate that the dominant UK prostitution debates circle around trafficking and street-based prostitution. These debates have informed my choice of intersectional and postcolonial feminist theory, which I explore later in the chapter. This chapter concludes with an exploration of theory related to the use of news sources, which contributes to my later analysis of sex worker voices in particular.

3.1 Framing

Theory around news framing and news values contributes towards explaining some of the antecedents leading to mediated constructions of sex work/ers, and helps contextualise dominant narratives. Todd Gitlin (2003) explores the notion of a 'given reality' through his explanation of media framing, describing frames as "principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin, 2003:6). When placed alongside

the concept of news values, framing theory clarifies reasons for the representation of particular sex workers.

Robert Entman (1993) describes framing as emergent from a process in which particular aspects of a perceived reality are selected and made salient through a communicating text, so as to promote a specific definition or interpretation of a problem (Entman, 1993:391-392). A process of framing is summarised by Entman as follows:

Frames, then, *define problems*—determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; *diagnose causes*—identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral evaluations*—evaluate causal agents and their effects; and *suggest remedies*—offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects.

Entman, 1993:392

Entman's definition is key to understanding a theory of framing as it relates to my own research. His placement of common cultural values as determining of a problem highlights the position of each newspaper's readership. Similarly, the emphasis on *diagnosing causes* is an interesting point of consideration with regards to the ways sex workers are presented: in reflection of the public nuisance/innocent victim debate—is the core issue identified as the sex worker, the work itself, or society at large?

Paul D'Angelo (2002) provides a critical response to Entman's position on framing theory, with a focus on news framing in particular. D'Angelo proposes three possible paradigms to news framing, two of which, cognitive and critical, I have utilised. D'Angelo describes cognitivist framing theory as focusing on the negotiation between the frame and the individuals' prior knowledge; this paradigm sees individuals use semantic association to process information found within a news frame (D'Angelo, 2002:876). The critical paradigm, on the other hand, approaches framing from a journalist-led perspective of news values. D'Angelo points to the way that this paradigm views framing as the outcome of newsgathering routines in which journalists convey information "from the perspective of values held by the political and economic elites" (D'Angelo, 2002:876). The critical

paradigm speaks to a process in which frames are linked to hegemonic social processes, whereby information is selected and omitted depending on its relationship to the status quo (ibid).

Using these approaches to framing has helped me identify the ways sex workers are framed according to wider structures of power and influence, as well as popular social perspectives. My framing analysis is supported by a theory of news values, which I now detail.

3.2 News Values

Leading on from Easterbrook-Smith, my theoretical approach has been informed by Galtung and Ruge's 'news values'—a series of characteristics believed to influence whether or not an event will be considered newsworthy (Galtung and Ruge, 1965/1981). Drawing upon these values through my analysis helped me identify the ways particular news pieces function.

Galtung and Ruge's taxonomy of news values has been critically analysed by media theorists speaking in the evolving environment of contemporary news production. Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill (2001) in particular provide an updated outlook; whilst acknowledging the cultural significance of Galtung and Ruge's seminal paper, the authors point to the way that the paper assumes a given reality to exist, from which news gatherers select or exclude events (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001:265). Harcup and O'Neill point out that many news stories have less to do with actual "events", reflecting instead "mini-events" within a larger story or simply pointing to wider issues, trends or speculation (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001:267).

As discussed previously, my interest lies in whether the hidden nature of sex work affords media producers a greater depth of sensationalist interpretation. The idea that a 'reality' of prostitution exists, and is simply selected and reported, is somewhat antithetical to the prostitute imaginary construct. A perspective of news values is relevant to my consideration of who newspapers represent in the discussion around sex work, and the ways in which they represent them.

A concern with representation is identified by Harcup and O’Neill as they point to the work of Stuart Hall (1973). Hall argues that whilst Galtung and Ruge’s news values appear as “neutral, routine practices”, it is important to interrogate the ideological structure which underpin them, viewing them instead as a formalisation and operationalisation of social ideology (Hall, 1973 cited in Harcup and O’Neill, 2001:265). Hall’s perspective is vital to my analysis, as it brings into account the wider ideological influences underpinning mediated representations of sex workers. Rather than a value neutral reportage of events, representations of sex work with this theoretical lens can be seen as a product of hegemonic belief systems.

3.3 Postcolonial and Intersectional Feminist Theory

Just as Easterbrook-Smith’s theoretical framework is informed by New Zealand policy and politics, it is important that my own choice of theory is contextual to the UK. It has therefore been necessary to consider: what current UK policies and socio-political movements are likely to affect discourse around, and perceptions towards prostitution? And, particularly, what has happened in the years since Aspevig’s 2011 analysis?

Arguably one of the most significant and enduring political struggles to descend on Britain in recent years is Brexit. The 2016 Brexit referendum saw the UK population vote to leave the EU, with migration listed as a defining issue of the Leave campaign (Outhwaite, 2019:np). Research by Oxford University showed that in the lead up to the referendum, *Daily Mail* included the most pro-Leave articles of all the UK newspapers, with *The Guardian* publishing the second-most pro-Remain articles (Oxford University, 2016). The relevance of Brexit to discourse around prostitution emerges through the topic of migration, and the prevalence of debates around trafficking for sex.

Mac and Smith (2018) point to the way in which contemporary discourses around trafficking have seen politicians deploy the language of slavery, citing a claim made by UK former government minister that “we are facing a new slave trade, whose victims are tortured, terrified East European girls rather than Africans” (Mac and Smith, 2018:157). It is through such co-option of slavery terminology, as Mac and Smith explain, that anti-migration politicians are able to “posture as anti-trafficking heroes

even as they enact their anti-migrant policies” (2018:172). As identified in section 1.1 of the introductory chapter, the language of slavery has long permeated discourse around prostitution. Victorian era feminists campaigned against what they described as the ‘white slave trade’ of prostitution, whilst anti-trafficking campaigns of the nineties were shown to adopt the mythical “white slave” paradigm (Doezema, 1999). With its enduring reliance on an exploitative narrative of saviourism, this evolving discourse has informed my choice of postcolonial feminist theory.

Laura Agustin (2007) brings a postcolonial framework of analysis to her study of the migration and trafficking debate, questioning Western traditions of ‘rescuing’ non-European and poorer women (2007:8). Ritu Tyagi (2014) describes the way in which, in eagerness to voice the concerns of colonised women, “White feminists have... imposed White feminist models on colonized women, and thereby, worked as an oppressor (Tyagi, 2014:47). In a description that echoes Shannon Bell’s earlier depiction of the prostitute as “the other within the categorical other” of the female, Tyagi describes a “double colonization”, pointing to the ways women experience the simultaneous oppression of colonialism and patriarchy (Tyagi, 2014:45). This perspective is helpful for considering the ways in which migrant sex workers in the UK are depicted in relation to their British counterparts.

As identified in my literature review, issues around street-based prostitution have produced a similarly significant debate within UK news media. Street-based workers are positioned at the lowest end of the sexual labour hierarchy, with the material experience of the street-based worker informed by multiple systems of oppression. This hierarchy is reflected in Bernstein’s (2007b) previously identified ‘respectability’ of sexual commerce, and has informed my choice of intersectional feminist theory.

A theoretical perspective of intersectional feminism points to “a woman’s varied experiences based on her race, class, sexual orientation or another identity she holds in addition to her sex” (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005 cited in Gerassi, 2015:4). From this perspective, oppression or privilege can be seen as a convergence of systems rather than the product of any single identity. Through the application of intersectional feminist theory, I have examined the ways intersecting factors of oppression inform representations of the most disprivileged worker identities. An intersectional perspective has helped me examine the effect of taking an exclusionary approach, where identities are conceptualised as the result of one singular oppressor.

3.4 News Sources

My final theoretical lens is based around the idea of news sources, in particular the ways they are perceived as credible or acceptable and how they are utilised in discourse. Zakary Tormala and Richard Petty (2004) describe source credibility as key in eliciting persuasion, and dependent on the level of perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the source (2004:429). I believe that considering parameters of perceived expertise and trustworthiness in relation to sex workers will contribute to an understanding around the stigmatisation of different worker identities.

Herbert Gans (2004) identifies four factors that influence access to journalists by potential sources: *incentives, power, the ability to supply suitable information* and *geographic and social proximity to the journalists* (2004:117). Gans describes the ability to supply information as crucial, but points to the way that the other three factors enhance the overall visibility and perceived usefulness of a source. These factors provide a starting point for my analysis of sex worker voices.

With reference to the *incentives* factor, Gans describes the way opportunity is weighted towards sources which are eager to provide information (Gans, 2004:117). This factor raises the importance of considering the identities of the voices present and the ways that their motivations for speaking are presented. Gans goes on to describe the importance of *power* in influencing source access to journalists, with the recruitment of sources reflecting wider social hierarchies and “normally only [gaining] access with an unusually dramatic story” (2004:119, 121). This point reflects Galtung and Ruge’s positioning of *unexpectedness* as a news value, providing an indicator for the way voices might be utilised according to such values.

The final point, *geographic and social proximity*, is influenced by “all the structural and demographic factors that shape other social relationships” (Gans, 2004:125), and results in the increased visibility of those with a similar background to the journalist or audience. This point is reflective of Galtung and Ruge’s news value of cultural proximity and is particularly pertinent when considering the demographic of represented voices.

As well as considering the access to speaking, it is useful to consider the varying ways voices are utilised within discourse. Karen Ross and Cynthia Carter (2011) examine the gendered nature of source utilisation, identifying the way in which:

[W]omen's voices are invited to provide personal testimony and impressionistic anecdote rather than authoritative and informed perspectives, further consolidating traditional gendered binaries of male/public/professional vs. female/private/personal

Ross and Carter, 2011:1160

Considering the ways voices are presented in discourse helps explain which voices are considered more or less 'acceptable'. To help me identify this, I will draw upon Fairclough's conceptualisation of discourse representation.

Fairclough (1992/1995) identifies two main tendencies in the representation of discourse in newspapers, connecting each to wider ideologies of news production (1995:54). The first tendency outlines "a low demarcation between primary and secondary discourse", speaking to the way newsmakers adopt source voices as their own (Fairclough, 1995:61), whilst the second makes reference to the way that represented discourse "functions and is contextualised in the representing discourse" (1992:282). As Fairclough describes, the ways that discourse is oriented within wider structures of interpersonal meaning and situational context will affect the reader's understanding and interpretation of the issue (Fairclough, 1992:282). This point is again reflective of Hall's (1973) emphasis on interrogating the social ideology behind produced discourse, and helps produce a holistic understanding of the ways voices are presented in accordance with wider systems of ideology.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

The scope of this thesis is to investigate and compare UK news media representations of sex work and sex workers between the years 2015 to 2018. Through an analysis of news media articles published by *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* during this period, I consider three questions:

- 1) How does each newspaper frame sex work and the workers themselves through mediated discourse around prostitution in the UK?
- 2) In what ways are sex worker voices utilised as sources in the selected content?
- 3) From a postcolonial and intersectional feminist perspective, does each newspaper attach conditions to more or less acceptable forms of sex work through such framing and utilisation of voices?

These questions have emerged from close reading of existing research, as well as through building a theoretical framework around the topic of media representation and media production. My approach and choice of questions in particular have been informed by Easterbrook-Smith (2018), who asserts that:

[F]ostering and beginning a conversation about who is perceived as an ‘acceptable’ or ‘respectable’ sex worker will also make apparent which sex workers are still stigmatised, and the mechanisms by which this stigma is applied.

Easterbrook-Smith, 2018:66

Factors of acceptability will relate to the ways particular sex workers are presented. Whilst considering acceptability as produced through the reading in my literature review, I have also followed parameters outlined by Easterbrook-Smith (2018). I will consider the conditions placed on acceptable labour as it is produced through discourse, identifying who is presented as an acceptable sex worker and how this category is “constructed and enforced” (Easterbrook-Smith, 2018:9).

As an industry typically hidden from view, an exploration of media framing is key to understanding some of the stigmatisation directed towards the sex industry, particularly in relation to the use of sex worker voices. Fairclough's focus on the ways that voices are contextualised has been particularly useful, and provides a connection point between my first and third research questions. Whilst 'represented discourse' points to the sex worker voice, exploring the 'representing discourse' into which the voice is contextualised points to the examination of the wider frame in which the voice is presented.

4.2 Methodology outline

My analysis takes the form of a mixed qualitative and quantitative interpretation of collected data. David et al. (2011) provide a helpful clarification of qualitative textual analyses, explaining the way "elements of texts are examined and given interpretive accounts based on their depictions of the broader cultural context within which the discourse occurs" (David et al, 2011:331). This point reflects my interest in clarifying the ways in which ideology informs representation, as well as pointing to my choice of research paradigm, which is interpretive.

As Collins (2010) explains, the interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is experienced and made meaningful by individuals (2010:39). This perspective fits my epistemology of standpoint feminism, which I outline in section 4.3, as well as the ontological belief that reality is a social construction. This paradigm points to the importance of contextualising analysis results, therefore reflecting my choice of theoretical framework—in particular Hall's (1973) important emphasis on contextualising news values within structures of social ideology.

As identified previously, the particular methodology I have followed for this analysis is one informed by a theory of framing, adapting a method developed by Matthes and Kohring (2008). Responding to concerns around the reliability and validity of media frame analysis, Matthes and Kohring developed the method through an operationalisation of Entman's four-step framing process (2008:258). The aim of the method lies in reducing researcher subjectivity, the risk being the extraction of "researcher

frames, not media frames” (Matthes and Kohring, 2008:259). This is something I have considered through the development of my methodology, considering ways to sidestep my own bias as solo researcher.

The premise of Matthes and Kohring’s method lies in the notion of frames as patterns composed of several variables. According to Matthes and Kohring, the only way to measure a frame “in a valid and reliable way” is to identify its separate parts, and code for each element (2008:263). The author’s utilise Entman’s conceptualisation of the framing process, which is the one that I too have applied.

As I am interested in producing primarily qualitative results, I have used an adaptation of Matthes and Kohring’s technique. As I explain later in the chapter, I utilised the first three elements of Entman’s framing process: *problem definition*, *causal interpretation* and *moral evaluation*. Both Matthes and Kohring and David et al. describe the fourth element, *treatment recommendations*, across a binary of positive or negative judgment on the topic, which is not appropriate for the context of my research. The conversation is wider than a value judgment on whether sex work is inherently ‘good’, or ‘bad’, with such approaches overlooking the nuance of the debate.

Traditional framing analysis methods, as I have observed through my reading, range from qualitative interpretive approaches to entirely automated quantitative techniques. As described by David et al (2011), the method developed by Matthes and Kohring lies somewhere in between the two—after coding each element of the frame using quantitative content analytic techniques, the information is then analysed for patterns through a cluster analysis, whereby frames emerge from clustered patterns (2011:332). For the purpose of my own analysis, I interpreted my data manually, taking a more qualitative approach, to better account for the nuances of language within data.

To supplement this aspect of analysis I implemented coding patterns for *connotative language* and *truth claims* into the analytical process, as extracted from Aspevig’s (2011) research. As described by Aspevig (2011), connotative language points to the associated meanings added to statements within text which work to reinforce claims (2011:86). For this process I utilised the following ten connotative terms as established by Aspevig: *Victim*; *Pragmatic*; *Ambitious entrepreneur*; *Con artist*; *Seducer*;

Criminal; Sinner; Public health threat; Public nuisance; Other, as well as adding three of my own that emerged inductively through analysis: *Social benefactor; Survivor; Victim of stigma*.

Truth claims, as Aspevig explains, can be described as “overarching claims about prostitution as a general phenomenon” (Aspevig, 2011:108). Whilst Aspevig uses truth claims to identify an articles’ validity—searching for biased or unfounded statements that support them—I utilised these claims to inform my coding for frames. I coded for fourteen truth claims as established by Aspevig, plus five of my own that emerged through inductive analysis. I also coded for news values as identified by Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Harcup and O’Neill (2001).

4.3 Epistemology

Sanders, O’Neill and Pitcher (2009) identify the way that any researcher investigating the sex industry will have their topic and method influenced by their own perspective on prostitution (2009:166). Rather than viewing research an ‘objective and detached’ practice, the authors explain that the researcher’s perception of the issue, as well as factors such as gender, ethnicity and other personal characteristics will affect their approach (ibid).

Whilst my methodology is designed with the aim of reducing personal bias, my perspective on the sex industry—a fundamental perspective of sex workers’ rights—has strongly informed my research direction. Making sense of the sex industry requires listening to those who have current lived experience from inside it. Accordingly, I have followed an epistemological approach of feminist standpoint theory.

A feminist standpoint approach privileges lived experience as the starting point for knowledge—in particular, the lived social experiences of women (Blaikie, 2009:168). In this context, those within an oppressed community are considered to be epistemically advantaged to understand their experience of marginalization (Sanders et al, 2009:169). The standpoint perspective complements my personal stance as researcher as well as my paradigmatic approach of interpretivism, in which the world is sought to be understood from the subjective experiences of individuals (Antwi and Kasim, 2015:219)

Sanders et al. (2009) outline an important critique of standpoint feminist epistemology, identifying the way power and oppression is defined around notions of gender imbalance, whilst overlooking imbalances of power between women (Sanders et al, 2009:169). As identified in my literature review, a lack of detail around the demographic of sex workers in Aspevig's (2011) discourse analysis led to a homogenisation of sex worker voices. It was therefore important that I adopted an intersectional perspective to this epistemology, identifying as far as I can the position of the individual sex worker in relation to hegemonic power structures of race, class and gender.

4.4 Sampling rationale

My decision to analyse newspaper content is informed by a desire to identify the depth of sensationalist interpretation afforded to media producers in their representation of sex work and workers themselves. As identified by Easterbrook-Smith (2018), dominant discourses within media texts contribute to the reinforcement of existing stigma around sex work, with the power of defining 'acceptable' sex work having moved—at least in the context of New Zealand—from the courts to the media (2018:67,68).

Leading on from Kristin Aspevig's 2011 research, I have chosen *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* as the sites of my analysis. As Aspevig (2011) describes, these two newspapers appeal to two major reader demographics, theoretically representing two dominant divergent perspectives.

The sampling period covered are the years 2015 to 2018. I have chosen these dates around three 'events', as identified through my own informal observations, which I believe to be representative of and relevant to a variety of sex worker experiences:

- 1) The 2015 introduction of the Holbeck Managed Zone in Leeds. The Holbeck Zone was introduced to address street-based sex work through the non-enforcement of prohibitive legislation around soliciting for sex within a designated location and time period, and is the subject of ongoing debate in British news media.

- 2) The 2016 Brexit vote. In 2019 the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) published a report on the effects of Brexit on EU sex workers based in the UK. The report identified a rise in police harassment and threats of deportation for migrant workers. In an interview, ECP spokesperson Laura Watson agreed that the ‘crack-down on non-British prostitutes [was] an extension of anti-foreigner feeling’ (PRI, 2019).
- 3) ‘Behind Closed Doors’, a 2018 report published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) focused “on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade” and in particular a phenomenon known as ‘pop-up brothels’. Whilst the APPG present such brothels as sites of ‘organised sexual exploitation’ (APPG, 2018), the ECP describe them as “a direct result of police raids and closure notices which force sex workers to keep moving premises” (ECP, 2018).

It is my belief that these three events will have produced peripheral discourse relating to migrant workers, indoors and outdoors workers. The aim of my sample is that the content around these three periods will provide a point of comparison for the ways in which workers in different sectors of the industry are represented.

Using the NewsBank database to gather articles from *The Guardian*, I searched with the terms “prostitute”, “prostitution”, “sex worker” and “sex work”. I reasoned that, as identified within my literature review, most framings can be attributed to a broad discourse of either ‘prostitution’ or ‘sex work’. From this point I manually downsized the selection by saving articles according to their relevance. This involved a personal value judgment in which I excluded any article with only a passing mention of any of the above terms, leaving only articles with sex work/prostitution as the primary article topic.

As NewsBank doesn’t include *Daily Mail* articles in its database, I searched for these through the *Daily Mail* website using the same terms as my NewsBank search. The selection of articles involved a similar manual process of selection according to subject and topical location. The *Daily Mail* search returned significantly fewer results than that of *The Guardian*. Rather than being an indicator of less

discourse on the topic, I suggest that this is more to do with the searchability and database of *Daily Mail* online content.

In total, my research involved the analysis of 25 articles by *The Daily Mail* and 39 by *The Guardian*. The spread of articles by year can be seen in the table below. Although unbalanced numerically, I believe that this sample offers a valid representation for the purposes a manual qualitative analysis.

Year	<i>The Daily Mail</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>
2015	6	10
2016	8	13
2017	4	7
2018	7	9

Table 1: Selected articles by year

Articles were gathered across the entire year, but were in some cases clustered over particular months or surrounding particular events. Whilst *The Mail* articles were not always explicitly related to a particular ‘event’, those from 2015 and 2016 were predominantly published over the months April, May, June and July, whilst those in the following two years were more evenly spread. There was no dominant connective theme across the clustered articles. Conversely, although articles by *The Guardian* were generally more spread throughout the year, they were consistently based around particular events. The 2015 Amnesty International call for global decriminalisation of the sex trade, or Jeremy Corbyn’s 2016 advocacy of decriminalisation policy in the UK are two such examples.

4.5 Method

The process of data analysis involved a two-step approach according to my research questions. For the framing analysis I followed an adaptation of Matthes and Kohring’s framing analysis method, as described in section 4.2 of this chapter, with the addition of Aspevig’s connotative language framings

and truth claims, and Galtung and Ruge's (1965) news values, as adapted by Harcup and O'Neill (2001). An example of a coded article can be seen in table 2.

Article #	Article	frame element	variables	Description	News Values	Connotative Framing	Truth Claim	
3.2	The rise and fall of a high-class madam: Former brothel owner lifts the lid on VERY famous clients including George Best and John Profumo (and says her friend was Jimmy Savile's 'favourite')	problem definition	topic: high class brothel	Glamorous, celebrity Niche fetishes, illicit details	Celebrity, entertainment, unexpectedness, power elite	3, 5	5, 3	
			actor: brothel madam high class	Enthusiastic for job Lucrative business Public service		11, 3	5	
			actor: 'exploitative' immigrant workers					1
		moral eval	benefits: lucrative business				3	lucrative
			benefits: engaging with the celebrity and power elite			unexpectedness		5
			benefits: providing for disabled customers				11	social good
			risks: exploitation by migrant workers if brothels outlawed					
		causal attribution	risk attribution: migrant workers responsible for exploitation					
			benefit attribution: brothel madams and sw/ers responsible for social good and happy husbands					

Table 2: DM2017/2, coded article

Once all content was coded my method departed from that of Matthes and Kohring, with my interpretation of results involving a qualitative and quantitative manual interpretation of data. Whilst Matthes and Kohring use Entman's *problem definition, moral evaluation and causal interpretation* elements to build frames through an automated cluster analysis of the results, my application of the method helped me code for news values, connotative framings and truth claims across these areas, which I later quantitatively assessed for frequency. Finally, I qualitatively interpreted the results in combination with particular textual descriptions found within the newspaper content and contextual knowledge gained through my previously identified reading.

I followed a similar process of coding for my analysis of sex worker voices. The table below is extracted from this analysis, and details articles by *The Guardian* in 2016. The headings in red relate to Gans' theory around news source selection, whilst the yellow headings refer to Fairclough's source representation theory.

Article	Voice	Incentives	Power	Ability to supply info	Geographic proximity	Direct /Indirect	Introduction to text	Contextualised
Jeremy Corbyn's views on the sex trade sum up the male left's betrayal of women	Anon brothel SW, NZ	Research subject	No power no visibility	Supports Bindels point	Interviewee in Bindel research (bias?)	Direct	Interviewee began working in a brothel when she was 18, prior to decrim (implicit knowledge and experience)	SW discussing NZ ind before/after decrim Began 12 years ago. "I don't think it made any difference," she said, "because the boss still does everything really dodgy, and I think that's how he did it when it was illegal." - may be the case but doesn't mean material conditions and safety has not changed. Laws protecting rather than management styles.
	Rachel Moran (SPACE)		Medium power high visibility	Supports Bindels point		Direct	Sex trade survivor	Discussing gender inequality of SW and leftist men
Jeremy Corbyn is right: decriminalising the sex industry is the way forward	Alex Feis-Bryce, National Ugly Mugs Founder	Policy reform	Medium power high visibility					Regarding safety of SWers with regards to policy
Romanian sex workers challenge UK immigration policy - Women targeted by Operation Nexus, which aims to deport foreign offenders, say they are legitimately self-employed	Anon migrant worker	Policy reform	Low power low visibility	First hand experience		Direct	Woman fighting deportation	Description of police raid, first hand experience. Not overtly referred to as SW.
	Anon migrant worker, "Victoria"	Policy reform	Low power low visibility	First hand experience		Direct	21 year old	Description of arrest at flat
	Anon migrant worker, "Maria"	Policy reform	Low power low visibility	First hand experience		Direct	25 year old	Description of police stop and on the spot detainment

Table 3: *The Guardian* voices coding chart

The method of coding for sex worker voices involved a qualitative interpretation according to the above elements. I then manually interpreted the results, identifying the frequency of particular themes emergent through the coding process. An interpretation of data relating to Gans' theory of source selection helped me produce a speculative understanding around the perceived credibility of particular sources, whilst analysing the ways in which voices were contextualised, as per Fairclough's theory, helped me to place voices within particular frames. In this way I endeavoured to combine my two analytical and theoretical processes, by contextualising the represented discourse of sex worker voices within the identified frames produced by the representing discourse.

4.6 Limitations and validity

By identifying frames through separate frame elements, my chosen method offers an overall advantage of analytic reliability. By analysing the separate constitutive parts of a frame, the method allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which particular frame elements are operationalised through varying combinations, leading to a more detailed analysis overall. As David et al. (2011) point to, one advantage of a method involving manual textual interpretation is the way “important frame-relevant elements” (2011:331) can be revealed through a close reading of the text in a way that automated approaches may miss. This is particularly true with regards to my focus of analysis and the manual approach, combined with a separation of frames by their elements, encourages reliability of results.

Whilst Matthes and Kohring’s method having been designed to identify frames through clusters rather than single variables, my interpretation of the method may lose some of their validity advantage. As a manual interpretation of coded data, any trends identified have emerged from my own personal evaluation from a qualitative and quantitative reading of the text. Whilst Matthes and Kohring manage to omit the researchers interpretive perspective through this stage of analysis, my method is informed by my subjective understanding of the data. Again, pointing to David et al (2011), the authors explain a disadvantage of the clustering approach as the way infrequently occurring categories “which may normally be substantively consequential when examined by human eyes, [can] be diluted in importance within cluster analysis” (2011:332). Although my approach may risk lessening empirical validity it has allowed me to explore the more infrequently occurring categories in much better detail.

My selected data similarly presented its own limitations. My choice of intersectional perspective was informed by identifying the way in which Aspevig’s (2011) research homogenised sex worker voices, but the required anonymity surrounding sex workers presented a potential barrier to gaining such a perspective. Without identifying information such as race, sexuality and gender identity, my interpretations became more closely connected with the more visibly implicated identifying aspect of social class. Whilst an identification of social background provides development to Aspevig’s research,

the risk here is of overlooking important permutations of representation and oppression experienced by those individuals existing at intersecting points of marginality.

Another important limitation is surrounding the inclusion of sex worker voices. As pointed out by Mac and Smith (2018), sex workers face considerable barriers to speaking, with “even the most privileged sex workers [taking] a considerable risk by becoming publicly known” (2018:50). Without speaking to the media producers it is not possible through my analysis of secondary data to provide more than a speculative reflection on the process of voice selection and inclusion.

4.7 Ethics

Hubbard (1999) provides a useful reflection on the ethical considerations of sex work research, emphasising the importance of considering the ways constructed knowledge can be variously used—particularly in potential contribution to the empowerment or oppression of the sex worker community (1999:230). This was important to keep in mind throughout my research process, and is reflected both through my research aim of producing knowledge that will contribute towards understand and reducing stigmatisation towards sex workers, as well as through the following considerations:

With my analysis having been focused around secondary data, without informed consent—particularly of those with more vulnerable social positioning—it has been important to consider my representation of the research subjects. I have aimed to provide accurate interpretations of represented discourse and have considered the ways I identify speakers in order to ensure anonymity where necessary.

Another consideration has been around my choice of language. Whilst the term ‘prostitute’ is utilised within the sex worker community, the word is frequently utilised by non-sex working commentators in a connotative reproduction of stigma. As Easterbrook-Smith (2018) identifies, the term ‘prostitute’ is frequently presented alongside a “negative modifier” in order to produce the worker in a particular light (2018:90). Despite having used the terms ‘sex work’ and ‘prostitution’ interchangeably

throughout this thesis, there has been a purposeful consideration when referring to individuals—as indeed sex workers, rather than prostitutes.

As identified in the previous section, a lack of identifying factors around individual workers has produced class identity as a key factor in my intersectional analysis. This has been a point of consideration through my representation of results. Wahab and Sloan (2004) claim that, despite street-based sex work taking up a comparatively proportion of the industry as a whole, a class focus has produced disproportionate representation of these workers in academic research (2004:3). In doing so, the authors explain, other forms of sex work are invisibilised and shielded from the research gaze (2004:3). I have therefore endeavoured through my analysis to provide a balanced representation of various forms of sexual labour.

Hubbard (1999) explains the importance of producing knowledge that “minimizes health and safety risks of sex work and makes a case for the recognition of prostitution as legitimate work” (1999:233). I believe that approaching this project from a sex workers’ rights perspective. Where epistemic advantage is given to those within the community, honours this necessary recognition.

5.0 Presentation and analysis of results

5.1 Daily Mail

5.1.1 Framing

As described by Gitlin (2003), the framing process points to the way news is selected and presented for a given audience (2003:6). With the case of *Daily Mail*, its specification to audience is manifest in its news values, with *entertainment*, *reference to persons* and *unexpectedness* coded as those which most frequently appeared. These values are strongly reflective of the process of tabloidization, in which content departs from information and analysis and towards scandal and popular entertainment (Williams, 2009, np).

When organised into topical themes, *Daily Mail* articles were broadly categorisable by forms of sexual labour, with the highest proportion of articles focused around high-end independent escorting, followed by street-based and brothel work. Articles were frequently focused on the anecdotal experience of individual sex workers. To return to Grant's (2014) idea of the prostitute imaginary, where the prostitute is constructed as a representational composite within discourse, *Daily Mail* accounts offer a representation that initially seems to challenge this notion. With the voices of sex workers themselves leading the articles, and transitive verbs such as 'reveal' in the headlines, the women are positioned as having inherent knowledge of the 'reality' of life in sex work. The notion of discourse mirroring reality is reflective of both Entman (1993) and Gitlin's (2003) respective conceptualisations of framing as the construction of a perceived reality for a specific audience.

In the case of *The Daily Mail*, a strong news value theme within the first person accounts of sex work was *unexpectedness*. The headlines alone are indicative of this: "*I have saved 5,000 marriages': Brothel madam who spent decades as a sex worker says she's PROUD of her career...*" (DM2015/3) being one such example. As a profession with such deeply associated stigma, *unexpectedness* is a powerful tool in the representation of sex work and workers themselves. Throughout *Daily Mail* articles, *unexpectedness* was produced through a reliance on class-based tropes of social hierarchy, countered

with the implicit or explicit suggestion of who we as the reader might perceive a sex worker to normally be—“*Yes I’m a prostitute, but I’m also smart*” (DM2015/4) reads one *Daily Mail* headline.

The value of *unexpectedness* was deepened through an application of *cultural proximity* and *entertainment* news values. The economic and social background of the sex worker was frequently presented in the introduction of their voice, with their socio-economic positioning or level of education used as an introductory statement. Through positioning the sex workers as educated and affluent with backgrounds of privilege, *The Daily Mail* introduces the ‘Middle England’ readers’ own cultural points of reference. In this way, the value of *cultural proximity* is utilised in producing the unexpected: “I’m just a normal person who wants to make money [and] secure a future for myself” explains one sex worker in an article titled “*The marine biologist selling her body to pay off student debt...*” (DM2018/4). D’Angelo’s (2002) theory of cognitivist framing, where the frame is in negotiation with the individuals’ prior knowledge, is reflected here. The semiotic association of the workers’ family life or education provides a context for social understanding between—to return to Gitlin (2003)—“spatially distanced and/or socially segregated groups” (2003 cited in Hallgrímssdóttir et al, 2006:267).

The value of *unexpectedness* combines with *entertainment* through the depiction of sexual labour and its peripheral activities. Returning to the prostitute imaginary figure, Grant (2014) describes the way she becomes “a reduction of her work and [life] to one fantasy of a body and its particular and limited performance” (2014:102). Within *Daily Mail* content, accounts of the sex workers’ performed labour are frequently presented alongside their average income, or number of clients: “I charge a minimum of \$500 an hour—a whole night can be \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending if they want the full experience... my best clients take me out for dinner, cocktails and the theatre” (DM2015/1) reads one such example, with accounts of such work frequently combined with an evaluation of the labour as financially and personally empowering. Such assertions reflect Entman’s (1993) third factor in his framing process theory where causal agents are *morally evaluated* with an analysis of their effects. This is also seen in several sex workers’ description of their work as a social good, with one woman in particular presenting herself “as a ‘naked therapist’ rather than a prostitute” (DM2015/2). Such moral evaluations by *The Mail* contribute towards framing the sex worker as an empowered social benefactor, positioning the affluent sex worker as socially and morally acceptable.

Similarly to high-end workers, the rates charged by street-based workers are frequently foregrounded: “*Revealed: how prostitutes in one English city sell their bodies for less than a meal deal...*” (DM2017/4) reads one headline, with another reading: “*Prostitute sisters reveal how their crack addiction sees them selling sex for just \$20*” (DM2016/4). The binary of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ prostitution is presented here quite clearly, with acceptability produced around capitalist understandings of economic productivity. A politically conservative perspective of individual achievement as a driving factor of economic prosperity is reflected in this framing of the sex worker according to their income. In this way, *The Mail* appeals to its predominantly conservative readership. Entman’s (1993) conceptualisation of framing is also reflected here; as Entman describes, the process of framing involves the selection of “some aspects of a perceived reality” which are then made salient through communicating text, so as to promote a specific problem interpretation (1993:391). The worker’s income is therefore the aspect of reality, as *The Mail* perceives it, around which they create their frame. The *problem definition* (Entman, 1993:392) is therefore produced according to this particular, economically focused interpretation.

The persistent focus on sex workers’ earnings leads into the final significant news value of my *Daily Mail* analysis: *newspaper agenda*. Described by Harcup and O’Neill as “stories that set or fit the news organisation’s own agenda” (2001:279), this news value emerged through an inductive process, according to my own perception of the *Daily Mail* agenda. As well as a focus on income, the most frequent agenda topic was ‘traditional family values’. As identified in the background section of this paper, *The Mail* is described as “pro marriage and the traditional family and unequivocally for ‘traditional values’” (Temple, 2008:90). The family values of individual sex workers were often pointed to, again evoking a sense of cultural proximity to the reader: “[E]scorts... admit all they really want to do is settle down near Mum” (DM2015/1) reads one headline illustrating this. At the same time, street-based workers were presented as a threat to the family structure, corrupting children and enticing husbands: “One [sex worker] brazenly waves her cigarette at a young girl, who squeals: ‘Look, mummy!’” (DM2018/6) reads one article, whilst several articles on Holbeck managed zone describe local men as harassed by the “desperate and volatile” workers (ibid).

The prevalence of Harcup and O’Neill’s (2001) *newspaper agenda* value within *Daily Mail* content brings to the fore Hall’s (1973) important critique of Galtung and Ruge. As identified within the theoretical chapter of this paper, Hall stresses the importance of interrogating the ideological structure

underpinning news values, viewing them as an operationalisation of social ideology (Hall, 1973 cited in Harcup and O'Neill, 2001:265). D'Angelo's critical framing theory, in which journalists are seen to convey information "from the perspective of values held by the political and economic elites" is also reflected here (D'Angelo, 2002:876). Through such theory it's possible to see the ways in which *Daily Mail* produces and contributes towards the ideological perspectives of its readership through reproducing hegemonic ideas about financial prosperity as a legitimising factor of success.

After exploring the ways in which sex worker voices are utilised, this implementation of ideology will be explored further in the following section in which I bring an intersectional and postcolonial perspective to my analysis.

5.1.2 Voices

The sex worker voices found within *Daily Mail* content were categorisable as follows: indoor workers (11 voices), outdoor workers (6 voices), high profile former sex work(er) commentators (2 voices), unidentified sex workers (2 voices), miscellaneous former sex worker (2 voices). Many of the voices, especially those of current sex workers, were extracted from interviews surrounding the release of a book or television documentary. Returning to the *incentives* factor within Gans' (2004) four factors of influence, this incentive correlates clearly with the core *Daily Mail* news values of *entertainment* and *reference to persons*; as Gans identifies, opportunity is weighted towards those eager to provide information (2004:117)—within this context, *The Mail* is seen to be utilising the voices of visible sex workers who are already telling their story in the context of media entertainment.

Of the 23 voices present in *Daily Mail* content, the majority were quoted as secondary sources from other newspaper interviews, television shows and public hearings. The existing visibility of these voices leads in to another of Gans' influencing factors: *social and geographic proximity*. As S. Abel (2004 cited in Easterbrook-Smith, 2018) points out, two of the biggest constraints faced by journalists are time pressure and the difficulty in finding the correct people to speak to in unfamiliar contexts (2004 cited in 2018:58). In this way, *Daily Mail* utilise sex worker voices from existing media, sidestepping the process of sourcing a sex worker who is both willing to talk and to be identified.

When considering the ways that voices were contextualised within the representing discourse (Fairclough, 1992) there was an emergent theme for sex workers to be introduced through a

description of their upbringing and family values. *The Mail* positions the voice in close proximity to the readers' frame of reference and thus further contributes to the framing of sex workers as having close *cultural proximity* to the audience. In reflection of Tormala and Petty's (2004) notion of source credibility, *The Mail* adds persuasion to its framing through its introduction of sex worker voices as relatable to the audience.

With regards to Gans' factor of *power*, a consideration of the broader social positioning of the voices present was useful for identifying the ways different voices were utilised for different purposes. Just as Gans theorises, those voices with lower social power were presented alongside "unusually dramatic" stories and accounts of "moral disorder" (Gans, 2004:121, 81), whilst the voices of indoor sex workers and those with higher social positioning such as Dr Brooke Magnanti—who gained fame as author of *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*—were introduced as experts on the topic, presenting opinions and reflections opposed to anecdotal accounts.

Voices belonging to highly visible activists were consistently presented *through* their marginalised identity groupings. Activist and former sex worker Paris Lees is, in one article, introduced through her trans-status and history of "family rejection" (DM2016/1) whilst in another, Rachel Moran—founder of sex work survivor organisation SPACE and former sex worker—is positioned through her history of abuse, drug addiction and homelessness. Whilst providing credibility to the framing, the voices are constituted through the damaged prostitute figure. This representation is reflective of Fairclough's (1995) focus on the 'ideational meaning' of words, as *The Mail* orients the voices of sex workers within wider frames of reference in an ongoing reliance on familiar tropes surrounding marginalised identities.

5.1.3 Acceptability

After focusing initially on representations of the privileged worker, this section considers the representation of the most disprivileged identity groupings of sex workers in the UK: migrant workers and those who work outdoors. Discussion around migrant workers in *The Daily Mail* increased exponentially throughout the sample period. Two dominant representations of this grouping emerged through a quantitative analysis of the connotative framings and truth claims identified through coding: *criminal*, used to describe street-based migrant sex workers and *victim* for those working

indoors. In a reflection of Doezema's (1998) previously identified forced/innocent, voluntary/guilty dichotomy, the difference between these two groupings is fundamentally a matter of the worker's perceived choice.

As well as perpetuating stigmatising notions of acceptable female sexuality through asserting the 'good' versus 'bad' sex worker binary, the positioning of the outdoors migrant worker as 'criminal' speaks to wider systems of structural oppression. In an analysis informed by postcolonial and intersectional feminist theory, I will now explore the ways in which I found this to manifest.

Agustin (2007) identifies the ways travelling to work by people from less wealthy countries is frequently viewed as criminally driven (Agustin, 2007:11,22). On several occasions migrant workers were described as stealing work from British sex workers. One article, published several months before the 2016 Brexit vote, describes the 'fierce competition' between British and European workers, with the former "furious that newcomers are stealing their turf and charging cheaper rates" (DM2016/2). This extract is hugely representative of dominant rhetoric at the time, particularly within *Daily Mail* discourse, and is a good indicator of the ways that *The Mail* journalists capitalise on existing social ideology through their framing.

Departing from Agustin's postcolonial perspective, *The Mail's* framing of street-based migrant workers as criminal is unsurprising. Taking into account the various social identities held by such women contributes to an understanding of this framing: migrants perceived as criminal and engaged in stigmatised labour, but also as women crossing borders, subverting traditional gendered ideas of travel. As Agustin explains:

Men's decisions to travel are generally (and seriously) understood [as] the product of their normal masculine ambition... but when women decide to travel, commentators search for reasons (Agustin, 2007:19)

With earlier articles featuring considerable debate around 'criminal' outdoors-working migrant sex workers, content produced in 2018 introduced a framing of the indoors migrant worker as *exploited victim*. The impoverished backgrounds of those working indoors were frequently pointed to, positioning such workers as experiencing economic desperation. In one case, a Hungarian woman's background was supplied as her reason for entering sex work: "The circumstances for her family took a

turn for the worst. She decided to start working...as a prostitute” (DM2018/3), the article reads. As Agustin (2007) describes, “giving economic need as the ‘reason’ for selling sex can also be a performance of ‘poverty’ that listeners will accept as an excuse for immoral activity” (2007:24-25). This contextualisation of the *victim* worker is reflective of Entman’s (1993) *defining causes* factor in his theory of the framing process (1993:392). The *victim* frame is justified through an attribution of blame towards the poverty of the individual. Through this assertion of choice (or lack thereof) the assumed deviancy of the migrant worker is transmuted into a position of victimhood.

In this way, it is possible to see the way in which *The Daily Mail* relies on class-based dependencies of power and agency. In another article, a Chinese worker is described as “a young impressionable girl far from home” (DM2018/2). From a postcolonial theoretical perspective, this description points to a tendency to infantilise migrant sex workers. As Valadier (2018) describes, this tendency:

implicitly reinforc[es] the idea that their migration project... cannot be the result of a mature, conscious and autonomous decision, but instead can only result from a lack of judgment due to their age. (Valadier, 2018:510)

The portrayal of the migrant worker as a submissive victim in need of help asserts the necessity of intervention, rationalizing the colonial Western feminist practice to ‘rescue’ the victimised worker. Tyagi’s (2014) conceptualisation of the postcolonial feminist concern is reflected through these enduring characterisations of the victim migrant worker.

Whilst British street-based workers were occasionally represented as *victim* when positioned alongside their ‘criminal’ migrant counterparts, the dominant framings for this grouping were *public nuisance*, *public health threat*, and *criminal*. Drug dependency and violence were forefronted as traits of those working outdoors. In one article, the journalist describes a violent assault in which one sex worker was hospitalised— “this is not to say the girls are blameless, far from it” (DM2018/6) he goes on to declare. Whether or not the journalist is attributing blame to this particular woman for her own assault, the positioning of sex workers as worthy of blame *even when they are experiencing horrific violence* is indicative of deeply entrenched and harmful perspectives around the humanity of the workers. As Jiwani and Young (2006) point out, reportage of violence against women frequently treats such instances as atypical, and “symptomatic of women who ‘ask for it’” (2006:901). In this context, violence against the sex working women provokes an existing culture of victim-blaming. The outdoors

worker is therefore further penalised whilst hegemonic discourse is sustained through a perpetuated othering of her body.

Despite justifying the labour of privileged sex workers through descriptions of lavish lifestyles and financial reward, *The Mail* frequently pathologises motives behind street-based prostitution with descriptions of drug dependency and abuse. As Mac and Smith (2018) point out, when engaging with the topics of drugs and sex work it is easier for the commentators to:

[B]lame the evils of sex and heroin... than to examine the structural context of prostitution and drug use. Examining these contexts would mean answering for the way that governments—not individual villains—are failing two of the most vulnerable groups of people in society

(Mac and Smith, 2018:194)

This point by Mac and Smith goes to the heart of the problem and reflects the way, through most descriptions of street-based labour, drug dependency was framed as an inescapable ‘evil’ to be managed through the enforcement of law. This point illustrates the class-based hierarchies which informed perceived acceptability of the labour.

From the perspective of intersectional feminist theory it’s possible to identify the way in which sex worker identity constructions are essentialised: as the experiences of the most privileged workers are presented as acceptable through a discourse of empowerment—thus appealing to a capitalist, conservative ideal of the empowered worker—those at the “neglected points of intersection of axes of oppression” (Carastathis, 2014:308) such as street-based and migrant workers are further marginalised through discourses of violence or victimisation.

5.2 The Guardian

5.2.1 Framing

With *The Daily Mail* frequently presenting sex work in relation to types of sexual labour, *The Guardian* content was primarily concerned with policy debate. Just as the dominant news values in

Daily Mail content were indicative of the newspaper's framing processes, *The Guardian* news values strongly reflect its journalism style and structuration of news. The most frequently attributed news value to *Guardian* content was *follow up*, followed by *magnitude* and *unambiguity*.

Discussions of policy were, by far, the most popular theme within the article selection, with particular cases or 'events' often acting as a focal point around which journalistic content would circulate. This focus on particular 'events' is reflective of the *magnitude* news value. When compared with the dominant *reference to persons* value found in *Daily Mail* content, where the stories of individual actors are focused upon, *magnitude* offers an alternative approach to the representation of news—this 'bigger picture' perspective took the form of discussion around proposed changes to policy, government reports or emergent research.

Harcup and O'Neill (2001) describe the *magnitude* news value as "stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers of people involved or the potential impact". Such discussions of policy are reflective of this; sex work was consistently examined through the risks and benefits of alternate policy structures, rather than as a moral evaluation of the work itself. While *The Mail* frequently presented sex work as an issue of the individual, *The Guardian* produces such labour as a politicised point of debate.

Within such articles, events or topics would frequently be introduced through mixed dialogic structure, with alternating perspectives presented in a more or less equal measure. This style of reporting is typical for a quality broadsheet newspaper such as *The Guardian*, and speaks to what Temple (2008) describes as 'mediacracy'—a process in which modern media "cater almost exclusively to the social and political tastes of the 'broad mainstream' of society" (2008:168). An example of this can be found in a 2015 article, "*Amnesty approves policy to decriminalise sex trade*" (G2015/10), where the voices of Amnesty International spokespeople and high profile sex worker and activist Laura Lee were presented alongside several high profile sex work survivors, two of whom—Rachel Moran and Fiona Broadfoot—have founded exit support organisations. This consistent reference to elite organisations and individuals produced the *power elite* news value as highly rated within the data. Although actors such as Laura Lee and Rachel Moran might not typically be considered 'celebrity' or 'elite', they are highly visible and hold influence and leverage in the field of sex work policy discourse; for the purposes of my research they were therefore coded as such.

Alongside these more balanced reports of events, peripheral articles were frequently presented from particular perspectives on individual issues. An example can be found in three articles on Jeremy Corbyn's public advocacy of decriminalisation policy, published on the same date in 2016. With one article presenting the event in impartial terms, a second piece by frequent *Guardian* contributor and well-known radical feminist writer Julie Bindel vehemently railed against Corbyn's perspective in an article titled "*Jeremy Corbyn's views on the sex trade sum up the male left's betrayal of women*" (G2016/2). The third article, "*Jeremy Corbyn is right: decriminalising the sex industry is the way forward*" (G2016/3) provided an antithetical perspective to that of Bindel's, and was written by Alex Feis-Bryce—founder of a national organisation for sex worker safety.

This style of article points to the final most dominant news values of *The Guardian* content: *follow up*, which Harcup and O'Neill describe as providing "the latest development in or somehow related to a previously newsworthy story" (2001:278), and *unambiguity*. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) present a critique of the *unambiguity* news value, focusing on the lack of clarity surrounding it: "is the ambiguity in the subject or in the journalist's interpretation?" the authors ask of Galtung and Ruge's original classification (2001:268). For the purposes of my coding, *unambiguity* refers to a lack of ambiguity in the journalist's perspective. The inclusion of such unambiguous reportage, often through articles published as opinion pieces, is reflective of *The Guardian's* core value system and aims of producing a "space for debate, dispute, argument and agreement" (guardian.co.uk, nd. cited in Singer & Ashman, 2009:5).

Beyond the self-fulfilment of a well-publicised value system of free speech, it is important to consider the ways that *Guardian* news values are informed by the wider ideological structures of their politics and readership. With right-wing discourse around prostitution frequently circulating around a radical feminist abolitionist perspective, leftist accounts of sex work are strongly polarised. *The Guardian* content saw writers such as Julie Bindel and Kat Banyard frame prostitution as an exploitative product of patriarchy, as advocates such as Molly Smith and Frankie Mullin approached the topic from a Marxist-feminist labour centred perspective of sex workers' rights. Whilst these particular approaches will be explored later in the chapter, this point illustrates the ways in which typically leftist perspectives on labour and gender inform radically different standpoints on commercial sex. By framing sex work

largely through opinion based articles that follow up on subjects already in the news, *The Guardian* is able to appeal to the broad leftist ideology of its readership.

5.2.2 Voices

Rather than around particular forms of sexual labour, *The Guardian* content was divisible by the positioning of the article author, which were broadly categorised as follows: reports by *Guardian* journalists, opinion pieces by sex workers and those within the sex workers' rights movement, and opinion pieces by non-sex working actors in the abolitionist movement. Each grouping utilised sex worker voices in different ways. The voices themselves were categorisable into four broad groupings: *highly visible sex worker/sex work commentator*, *anonymous sex worker*, *anti-prostitution advocate* and *sex worker rights' advocate*.

Eighteen of the 24 voices within content produced by *Guardian* journalists were evenly split between *highly visible sex workers* and *anonymous sex workers*. High profile sex worker and activist Laura Lee was one of two voices produced as indirect discourse, with two separate interviews displaying a low demarcation between her voice and that of the interviewer; several times, it was unclear whether the represented discourse was that of Lee's or the journalist. This representation is reflective of Fairclough's first tendency of representation where the primary voice adopts the secondary, as voice of reporter and reported become indistinguishable from one another (1995:61). Within both of these interviews, Lee was contextualised by the interviewer through her background in law as well as her work. In one article the interviewer describes the way Lee is:

Unexpectedly bright and cheerful... so friendly and kind, and so anxious to be as informative as possible that (despite being genuinely a little tired after a night working) she wants to help with the [interview] process (G2016/7)

This description of Lee points to a practice outlined by Easterbrook-Smith (2018), wherein news outlets emphatically point to a workers' friendliness or education "because it is presumed to be remarkable" (Easterbrook-Smith, 2018:157). A descriptive reassurance, Easterbrook-Smith explains, "constructs the workers as worthy of respect based on characteristics other than their work, or other

than their personhood” (ibid). Lee is inferred as a trustworthy, familiar source—adding to an overall sense of credibility.

Voices included in content produced by anti-prostitution commentators were split between those of *former sex work survivors* and *anonymous current sex workers*. With one current sex worker voice extracted from a government report, the rest were produced as paraphrased representations pulled from research interviews by the article author. The workers in these statements were contextualised as having inherent experience and knowledge of the industry, with the duration of their life in sex work frequently pointed to: “As a survivor, my perspective means firsthand experience of the realities of prostitution” (G2018/4) anti-prostitution campaigner Diane Martin is quoted as saying in one such article.

The inclusion of current sex worker voices in descriptive passages about the nature of work itself contributes to the notion of there being a ‘truth’ around sex work. In reflection of Gans’ (2004) *ability to supply information* factor of influence, voices in this case are utilised as testimonials, supporting the discursive point put across by the article author. Doezema (2001) points to the way in which first-hand testimonies of prostitutes’ experience are frequently utilised to demonstrate an empirical basis for theory—with only certain prostitutes’ perspectives considered as ‘true’ (2001:27). This is seen in the way authors such as Julie Bindel and Kat Banyard utilise the testimonials of anonymised sex workers to provide evidential credibility to their framing of sex work as abuse: “I met a women sitting next to her zimmer frame... disabled after a life in prostitution” (G2016/9) reads one article as Julie Bindel produces the injured prostitute body, evoking the act of prostitution as innately damaging. This utilisation is also illustrative of the relationship of dominance and subordination produced in ‘rescue’ discourse, wherein current sex workers are concretely positioned as victims—a point I explore further in section 5.2.3.

In a removal of agency from the individual worker, Bindel refers to those currently or formerly in sex work as ‘prostituted’ women, and attempts to deligitimise sex worker discourse by claiming: “groups claiming to represent ‘sex workers’ are just as likely to be a voice for pimps as they are to represent the women who earn their living selling sex” (G2017/1). Bindel’s point, seemingly informed by her own opinion rather than evidence, highlights a critical issue is around the perceived trustworthiness of the sex worker voice. With the voices of highly visible actors utilised by both newspapers to provide

journalistic credibility, the hidden nature of the work creates an environment in which those who are less visible seem to hold a lesser advantage of validity—open as they are to questioning such as that of Bindel’s above. This divide is representative of Gans’ theory of power in discourse, wherein wider social hierarchies are reflected through the overrepresentation of already dominant voices (Gans, 2004:119).

Just as the voices of anonymised sex workers with low power and visibility were predominantly produced in anti-prostitution articles as indirect discourse and represented through anecdotal accounts of their labour, the voices of more visible former sex workers were utilised in providing perspectives on policy and prostitution as a wider phenomenon. The voices of those with higher social power, such as councillors and founders of abolitionist organisations, are contextualised through their experience and knowledge, and often quoted directly from secondary sources. An earlier point by Ross and Carter (2011) is evoked here, where the authors identified the way in which women’s voices are invited to provide “personal testimony... rather than authoritative and informed perspectives” which are often provided by men (2011:1160). Again, the prostitute is produced as the “other of the other” (Bell, 1994:2), the other within the category of subordinate female.

The final article category is those produced from the perspective of sex workers’ rights. The voices present within these articles fell into two categories: *highly visible sex worker/commentator* and *sex worker rights organisation spokesperson*. The voices of article authors themselves were included in this count. The majority of articles by these actors featured no other external sex worker voices. This lack of reliance on the credibility of external sources suggests an understanding of the article author as *already* reliable. In this way, *The Guardian* utilises the voices of highly visible current sex workers to add to its values of free speech.

5.2.3 Acceptability

Similarly to the above analysis of voices, I categorised the connotative framings and truth claims by the article authors. Those within *Guardian* authored articles were mixed: with the strong emphasis on policy discussion and predominantly neutral representation, I decided that identifying acceptable forms of sexual labour as it is produced through this content would not be the most relevant question

to ask of this data. I therefore focus this part of my analysis on the opinion-based pieces by non-*Guardian* actors.

Although *The Daily Mail* produced varying perspectives on sex work, the newspapers' voice was consistently present throughout. Conversely, *The Guardian's* emphasis on 'free speech' and opinion pieces creates an environment where polarised perspectives are presented equally, and at the same time distanced from the voice of *The Guardian* itself. In this way, the newspaper retains a perspective of impartiality. Of the opinion-based articles, eight were written by actors within the sex workers' rights community and twelve written by anti-prostitution commentators.

Discourse led by those advocating for the sex workers' rights movement contained significantly fewer connotative frames and truth claims than those approaching from an anti-prostitution perspective. An example of this can be seen in a comparison between content by sex worker and author Molly Smith, in which three truth claims were coded over five articles, and that by prominent radical feminist commentator Julie Bindel, in which 26 truth claims were coded over seven articles. These figures are indicative of the way in which sex work discourse is framed by the sex workers' rights community—primarily as one of labour rights, rather than a discussion around the nature of work itself. The labour therefore is not presented across a spectrum of un/acceptability.

Connotative framings of sex work/ers made by non-sex worker actors fell into two groups: *victim* which represented just over half of the total framings, and *survivor*. Throughout the content, the prostitute is produced as a distinct body, with emotive language offering vivid descriptions of the embodied labour of sex work. In one article, Bindel describes the prostitutes' body as having become "a commodity, like a burger" (G2017/1), whilst another compares the body to purchasing a faulty product: "[T]he first thing you will do is pick it up and shake it. The same principle applies to prostitution. If your mouth isn't open wide enough or your throat isn't deep enough" (G2018/5).

This preoccupation with the body of the prostitute again echoes Grant's notion of the prostitute imaginary, wherein the sex worker is reduced to a body and its particular performance (Grant, 2014:102). Doezema's (2001) notion of the prostitute's 'injured body' as a Western feminist metaphor for female subordination is also strongly evoked here. As Doezema describes, the production of the

‘suffering body’ creates the inherently class-based and colonial positioning of the ‘saving body’ identity (2001:22).

Throughout *Guardian* articles, anti-prostitution writers consistently referred to the sex workers they discuss as ‘prostituted’. Along with dehumanising references to the prostitute body, this language further cements the perceived subordination of the sex working individual. As pointed to by Doezema (2001), the use of terms like ‘injury’ to indicate the effects of subordination “fixes the identity of the injured and the injuring as social positions” (Brown, 1995 cited in Doezema, 2001:21). From a postcolonial perspective, this construction of the dominant and subordinate identity reflects the oppressive imposition of white feminism onto colonised women. As identified above, the anonymised voices of current sex workers are utilised in contribution to this framing.

As Doezema goes on to describe, the injured prostitute provides an “ontological and epistemological basis for feminist truth” (2001:28). This point reflects, and could go some way to explaining the reliance on the suffering and victimisation of sex workers within the wider radical feminist discourse of women’s subjugation. This point is explicitly outlined through frequent claims of prostitution as an enactment of power by men: “prostitution [is] inherently abusive, and a cause and consequence of women’s oppression” reads one article, whilst another claims “the whole point of the sex industry is that it offers men the chance to buy sexual access to women who do not want to have sex with them” (G2017/4). Whilst not making specific claims about varying types of sexual labour, a claim is made to the truth of prostitution as fundamentally harmful, in any context.

These overt claims to the ‘truth’ of prostitution frames the issue from an epistemic position of feminist “moral posturing” (Doezema, 2001:21), rather than as a political debate. From an intersectional perspective, the notion of presenting a “truth” of sex work inherently compromises the multiplicities of the sex worker experience. Considering Patricia Hill Collins’ seminal work on feminist intersectionality is helpful for untangling the representational issue at hand; Collins (2000) presents a link between intersectional theory and what she describes as the *matrix of domination*. As described by Collins, the matrix of domination points to the way in which intersecting oppressions are organised—the “structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power [that] reappear across quite different forms of oppression” (Collins, 2001:18).

As identified in section 1.1, second wave feminist thought fundamentally conceptualizes prostitution as a product of gender inequality. This is reflected in discourse produced by writers such as Bindel and Banyard, who place focus on gender as the most pertinent form of oppression and the reason why the sex industry should be abolished. Within this context, the prostitute is *constituted* through the lens of male power, her ‘injured body’ representing the injury of all female subordination. The concern of the intersectional feminist as described by Carastathis (2014) is to overcome the reduction of a phenomena of oppression to “one foundational explanatory category” which becomes ontologically privileged (2014:308). Anti-prostitution critique of sex work mirrors this concern in its entirety. At the same time, the adoption of dehumanising language ironically reproduces its own concern of reducing a woman to a body, in an arguable reinforcement of the very matrix of domination which they seek to overcome.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper has provided a reflection on the way framings of sex work are constructed in contemporary British news media. I have throughout this thesis considered the following questions:

- 1) How does each newspaper frame sex work and the workers themselves through mediated discourse around prostitution in the UK?
- 2) In what ways are sex worker voices utilised as sources in the selected content?
- 3) From a postcolonial and intersectional feminist perspective, does each newspaper attach conditions to more or less acceptable forms of sex work through such framing and utilisation of voices?

The outcomes of this research have shown sex work to be framed most consistently through its positioning in relation to existing structures of social or cultural hierarchy, but also through historical conceptualisations of female sexual transgression. As a result, the prostitute is invariably constituted through a set of assumed beliefs that, I argue, are fundamentally connected to historical perceptions of sex, class-based tropes of social hierarchy and a colonial tendency to control and exploit those considered to be socially vulnerable.

Within content by *The Mail*, the sex worker frame emerges as either a matter of economic productivity, or through her function as a sexualised female body. Highly visible conditions of acceptability are produced through analyses of the worker's financial prosperity and social presence, reflecting neoliberal conceptualisations of entrepreneurship and civic responsibility. These parameters of acceptability are reflective of a critical paradigm of framing as outlined by D'Angelo (2002): in the active framing of financially affluent workers as empowered and socially useful, and the more disprivileged workers as criminal, *The Mail* reflects hegemonic value systems of the economic elite.

Voices of sex workers in *The Mail* were frequently utilised in a process of cognitivist framing. A negotiation opportunity between the frame and the reader's prior knowledge would be presented through an orienting of voices through stereotypical identity representations. Whilst serving the manifest function of providing credibility to the journalist in support of the article frame, latent meaning emerged through the contextualisation of the voices as former drug addicts or victims of

abuse. Whilst not overtly contributing towards notions of acceptability, voices were predominantly utilised as passive contributors to wider journalistic frames.

Throughout *Daily Mail* content, moral assumptions around sex itself provided cornerstones to the debate. There is an implicit understanding that sex for money is bad—unless you are getting paid enough for it. Through the frequent connotative framings of both *criminal* and *seducer* we can see that still, just as in eighteenth century conceptualisations, the prostitute is seen to paradoxically represent “the anathema and the very paradigm of the feminine” (Carter, 2004:22). At the same time, *The Mail* presents a moral recategorisation of sex work through mobilising historical notions of acceptable feminine behaviour: in a signification of the labour as useful, the prostitute is frequently framed as caregiver. In these ways, *The Mail* can be seen to combine parameters of acceptability as produced by a contemporary capitalist economy, with historical notions of acceptable female behaviour.

Whilst *The Mail* was found to produce acceptability through both contemporary frameworks of economic success and historical conceptualisations of acceptable femininity, content within *The Guardian* did not produce such overt judgments. Framing of prostitution emerged predominantly through the writing of anti-prostitution campaigners, in ongoing reliance on colonial tropes of dominant saviour and subordinate victim. For other contributors, prostitution was conceptualised through the implications of policy, with moral evaluations of the labour circling around the risks and benefits of particular policy structures.

The most highly visible claims to the un/acceptability of sex work found within *Guardian* content were produced by anti-prostitution commentators. This grouping displayed an enduring reliance on radical feminist conceptualisations of the prostitute identity, utilising the voices of sex workers in a way that perpetuated a frame of victimised subordination. In reflection of Mac and Smith’s point made in section 2.2 of this paper, the voices of former sex workers were frequently utilised by both *Guardian* journalists and anti-prostitution advocates. The prostitute imaginary figure is given form through vivid testimonials, echoing Victorian conceptualisations of prostitution as a site of “irrefutable injury” (Doezema, 1999:23). Just as the former sex worker is positioned as expert, the voices of those currently working were produced as paraphrased statements often reflecting a sense of passivity and victimhood.

Through graphic reductions of the prostitute to injured flesh, the frame of the victimised sex worker is constituted through discourse reflecting the pornotrope. By removing a sense of personhood in producing the prostitute body as a commodity, even as food, the act of prostitution is conceptualised—to echo Hortense Spillers’ description—as a crime against flesh itself, whilst the prostitute is produced as a sexualised ‘captive body’ (Spillers, 1987:67). Just as Victorian feminists asserted their position as saviour to the so-called ‘white slave’, the modern day saviour position is asserted here.

Whilst sex worker voices in *The Mail* content predominantly belong to visible subjects, *The Guardian* featured a high proportion of anonymised sex worker voices. As a result, the data presented limitations through a concealment of the intersecting identity points of those speaking. Future research could seek to overcome this limitation through gathering primary data from media producers. This method of research would also provide opportunity to further examine the process of sex worker voice selection, which was another limitation to my research design.

An aim of this study was to produce knowledge that could help understand the stigmatisation experienced and produced around different forms of sexual labour. This research has advanced towards this aim through the identification of framing techniques, and the ways that ideas around those who work in the sex industry are informed by foundational notions of sex and socio-cultural hierarchy.

Future research could further explore the representation of migrant sex workers—particularly in the years following the Brexit vote. The relationship between border policy, migration for sex work and sex trafficking are complex, and in the process of producing this paper were often tricky to delineate between within representing discourse. I believe that a critical exploration of the ways in which migrant workers are produced through mediated discourse is important; an exploration of trafficking discourse in particular, and the ways in which it is utilised to the concealment of wider debate around borders and migration would be useful and important research for the purposes of long term harm reduction. An analysis of the relationship between migrant sex worker framings and wider discourse around migration and border policy could provide a starting point for this research agenda. Such research would necessarily position the representation of migrant labour within a wider socio-political

framework, and provide an important contribution towards undoing the stigmatisation around what is such a marginalised identity grouping.

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