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Masculinities, vulnerability and negotiated identity:
Understanding the reporting behaviours of men who
experience violence or otherwise harmful behaviour,
within a sex work context.

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Abstract:

Context

The focus of sex work related discussions most commonly falls on female providers of sexual services, and male purchasers. As a result, the often victim-oriented policy response in England and Wales falls short of truly addressing the needs of men who are involved in the sale of sex, with there being limited support available for them and a systemic approach which does not fully recognise the potential for men to face harm within this context.

Methods

The aim of this study is to explore experiences of and reactions to violence, and otherwise harmful behaviours, faced by men in the context of their sex working, by understanding the lived realities of a sample of men who engage in this type of work. The study takes a phased approach which combines an initial informative quantitative survey, with three subsequent phases of semi-structured interviews with male sex workers, sex work-focused practitioners and police officers. The method is guided by feminist research principles which suggest that reality is situated within those with lived experience, and also by an element of co-creation which has grounded this study within the perspectives of male sex workers from its conception.

Findings

The findings of this research suggest that all of the men involved in the study had faced at least one of the violent or otherwise harmful behaviours outlined, though reporting of these behaviours was not at all common. Discussions with the male sex working participants, practitioners and the police highlighted the issues related to the structural influences of authority, such as the police, and the social environment, and the internalisation of these wider factors, which create barriers to reporting for groups such as male sex workers and others who face similar social marginalisation.

Conclusions

This study challenges existing gendered understandings of violence and otherwise harmful behaviour within a sex work context, by highlighting the harmful experiences of men. By exploring these experiences and the reporting behaviours of those involved, the study also proposes a new framework for understanding barriers to reporting, which suggests that these are formed through the influences of formal and informal measures of social control, and the internalisation of these outside influences by the individual. By better understanding the experiences of men, and the barriers to their reporting, this study attempts to nuance a gendered discussion. Within, I propose that in order to better support male sex workers, responses must begin by appreciating the heterogeneity of those involved in sex work and the influence of their individual circumstances and the social environment on their willingness to seek support.

Declarations and statements:

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Jordan Leigh Dawson (candidate)

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List of abbreviations:

| Abbreviation | Full term |
|---------------------|---|
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| APPG | All Party Parliamentary Group |
| CCHI | Cambridge Crime Harm Index |
| CPS | Crown Prosecution Service |
| GNSWP | Global Network of Sex Work Projects |
| GRID | Gay-Related Immune Deficiency |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| IM | Instant Messaging |
| LGBTQI+ | Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Queer and Intersex |
| NPCC | National Police Chiefs Council |
| NUM | National Ugly Mugs |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics |
| PAR | Participatory Action Research |
| SWAN Project | Support Wellbeing Advocacy and Enablement Project |
| SWRH | Sex Work Research Hub |
| UKNSWP | UK Network of Sex Work Projects |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

1 Introduction

As an issue, sex work has garnered significant research attention. The subject prompts often-emotive debate around its nature, the issues presented to those involved, the wider impact on communities, the ‘problem’ (discussed in detail in chapter 2) with sex work and the most effective solutions to said defined ‘problem(s)’. Those involved with sex work often represent a marginalised section of society, one whose commercial sexual behaviours come under scrutiny in legal, cultural and social arenas. As a consequence, the relationship between sex workers and the institutions and figures who appear to hold authority, such as the police, is one often characterised by tension.

Sex workers are disproportionately impacted by incidences of physical and sexual violence (Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2017), and there remains difficulty in protecting sex workers from the occurrence of these behaviours, identifying their incidence and providing criminal resolutions for those which do occur. There is also a paucity of services within England and Wales that seek to provide health and social care support to sex workers outside of a criminal justice context, with a particular gap in available support for men who sell sex (see Bryce *et al.*, 2015).

Indeed, this study is born from the lingering expectation that both sex work and victimhood are issues which primarily impact women. Whilst there may be scenarios in which this statement is true, I argue throughout this research that an unwavering commitment to such a position limits the development of an understanding of the lived reality of men engaged in sex work.

There has however, been an increasing attention afforded to men within sex work related research (see Minichiello *et al.*, 1999; Davies and Feldman, 1999; Scott, 2003; Whowell, 2010; Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013; Ellison, 2017; Morris, 2018) which has acted as a call to arms of sorts for a more inclusive understanding of sex work related issues.

There has also been a stark awakening to the reality that gender alone does not dictate experiences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours. Indeed, the case of Reynhard Sinaga, convicted of raping 48 men in Manchester, temporarily brought male victims of rape to the forefront of discussions of sexual violence in England and Wales. Sinaga’s victims, men who may have been more readily considered in terms of the threat they pose to others than their own risk of experiencing harm, demonstrated a contextual vulnerability not typically projected onto their identity by their socialised gender role.

Whilst there may be an increasing understanding of the issues of male sex work and potential male vulnerability separately, in contrast with the literature and policy response focused on female sex work, there has been considerably less consideration of the issues in tandem. This study, therefore, principally aims to understand the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or otherwise harmful behaviours. In order to meet this aim, I have identified the following research questions and related objectives:

Question 1: How, if at all, is violence or otherwise harmful behaviour experienced by male sex workers?

Question 1 related objectives:

- a. To investigate the occurrence and experience of harmful behaviour against men who exchange sex for money, or other incentives.
- b. To generate insight into the ways in which men negotiate the risk of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour during the course of their sex work.

Question 2: What understandings can be drawn from male sex workers reporting behaviours, related to their experiences of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours?

Question 2 related objectives:

- c. To explore and analyse the factors which influence the decision-making process when a male sex worker is considering reporting an incident of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour against them.
- d. To identify ways in which the reporting of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour can be facilitated.

Question 3: How does existing theory seek to explain male experiences within a sex work context and where are these understandings limited?

In order to meet the overarching aim and address the research questions, I have applied feminist research principles (see section 3.1.4) which situate knowledge with lived experience (see Doucet and Mauthner, 2007), and elements of co-creation (see section 3.2.4) which are aimed at allowing participants to present this experience on their own terms. Indeed, lived experience, the experience and interpretation of particular life events (Frechette *et al.*, 2020), is key to this

work. I have sought to consult those with direct experience of sex working or supporting sex workers throughout, in acknowledgement of the strongest and most poignant knowledge being situated with them.

The study takes a phased approach to data collection which combines a quantitative element with a primarily qualitative investigation of the lived realities of male sex workers, and those employed to support and protect them. The data collection model takes the form of four individual, consecutive phases, with each phase building upon the findings of the previous. The first phase involved a survey, designed with support from two sex work support organisations, two male sex workers and academics with experience in this area. The survey, which was administered online, provided the basis of discussion for phase two by testing attitudes and experiences. The second phase began the qualitative element of the study, utilising a semi-structured interview approach to discuss in detail male experiences of sex work and harmful behaviours, with those who have lived experience of exchanging sex for money or other incentives. The third and fourth phases of the research aimed to achieve further exploration with support service practitioners who have experience of working with male sex workers, and police officers who have experience of policing sex work, again utilising semi-structured interviews which were guided by the themes emergent from the findings of the previous phases.

By exploring the experiences of male sex workers, and answering the questions outlined above, this study contributes to applied and theoretical criminological understandings of barriers to seeking support faced by similarly marginalised groups, highlighting the structural mechanisms which influence decision making for victims of criminal and otherwise harmful behaviour and the impact of these mechanisms on the ways in which the men involved perceive themselves and their activities. The findings of this thesis adapt and extend left realist theory which has sought to explain the causes of crime by identifying how the same factors said to create a criminal incident also influence responses and reactions to criminal or otherwise harmful behaviour (see section 7.4). In proposing this novel understanding of barriers to reporting, this work offers the police, policy makers and other professionals working with marginalised groups an insight into how barriers may better be identified, and also how practice may be adapted so as to better encourage disclosure.

1.1 Definition of key terms

In this section I seek to demonstrate the meaning ascribed to a number of terms that I use throughout this work. It is important to acknowledge at this point that these definitions may indeed be debated, given that language is open to a degree of interpretation from the reader. By outlining the terms and their meaning here however, I seek to clarify my own interpretation of them, in order to give the reader an understanding of the sense in which they are used throughout this work.

1.1.1 Sex work

There is some difficulty in providing a definitive definition of what constitutes sex work. Questions must be asked firstly of what is accepted to be sex, and also what can be classed as work. Indeed, there are theoretical and ideological questions around whether sex work can be classified as being work, with there being arguments which suggest that it is exploitative, rather than legitimate, labour (see section 2.2.2 for further discussion). Where scholars have argued for the legitimacy of sex work as work, there are suggestions that discussing it as such does not say that sex work ‘is good or fun, or even harmless, nor that it has fundamental value’ (Smith and Mac, 2018:123). Instead, a discussion of sex work as work recognises the rights of those involved to be so without the threat of criminalisation and any related compromise to their safety whilst working (*ibid*).

Sex work as a practice is defined by Weitzer (2010:1), in what can be considered to be a high-level definition of sex work, highlighting ‘the exchange of sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation’. Importantly, Weitzer’s definition leaves space within for actions which do not fit the archetype of ‘prostitution’, which the public at large may gravitate to upon hearing the term sex work. Indeed, the inclusion of performances or products within this definition opens it up to a whole host of behaviours which do not fit within the label of prostitution, which has historically been applied to those who exchange physical sexual activity for money. Weitzer’s use of the term ‘material compensation’ also leaves open the possibility of sex work being paid for with something other than money, therefore challenging traditional notions of what is considered ‘work’. Indeed, what constitutes sex, work and payment exist upon a continuum which is often specific to an individual context. Weitzer’s definition recognises this and respects the fluid reality of the issue of sex work, which is significant for this study and its challenge of existing gendered and stereotypical

understandings of sex work which are focused on women exchanging physical sexual activity for money.

A look at Harcourt and Donovan's (2005) earlier work helps to further develop an understanding of what constitutes sex work, with their research identifying how sex work comprises of direct and indirect roles. Direct services involve physical sexual contact between the sex worker and client, and those classified as indirect do not, though there is a sexual nature to the action or service. This separation of direct and indirect behaviours is a recognition of the continuum of behaviours and means of delivering sexual services and is significant within this work because whether a sex work role is direct or indirect may in itself have implications for issues of vulnerability and risk of harm, related to the spaces in which sex work takes place and the proximity of the sex worker themselves to others whilst working.

Despite the continued recognition of the breadth of sex work within the literature, it is the direct sale of sexual services, referred to as 'prostitution', which has been at the forefront of much of the existing research efforts in this area (see Sanders, 2005). This has also been true of the policy and legislative responses to sex work, though the focus may be somewhat justified by the proximity of the client and sex worker within direct sex work, and the types of concern most commonly identified in research, such as sexual health and sex work safety.

There has however, been a marked rise in focus on sex work and the internet, which has provided a platform of change for the ways in which sex work manifests, and the activities on which research focuses (see Sanders *et al.*, 2018). Research such as the recent study by Matolcsi and colleagues (2021), has also highlighted arrangements which less explicitly fit into the earlier identified typologies, often involving a deeper relationship between the parties and less formalised transactions. This includes the identification of sugar arrangements, which often involves a more drawn-out relationship between two parties, with the sugar baby/boy compensated for their time spent with the often-older sugar daddy/mommy (Birkás *et al.*, 2020). This model of sex work challenges both the typical boundaries set between sex worker and client in traditional direct arrangements (such as prostitution), and also the ways in which transactions take place. For example, a sugar baby/boy may be compensated with a monthly payment and expensive gifts, rather than being paid in line with their hourly rate or for individual acts (Daly, 2017).

This study is concerned with the direct and indirect roles discussed above, given both the contact with clients and the overt sexual nature of the transaction. For the purpose of clarity, direct transactions of sexual services are considered to be the exchange of services such as masturbation, oral and penetrative sex, amongst a plethora of other sexual activity which

includes physical contact with the paying customer. Examples of indirect roles include performing in adult films, taking bookings as a ‘butler in the buff’ or selling content through OnlyFans, again amongst a plethora of other roles of a sexual nature. For an activity to be considered sex work there does not need to be an exchange of money, though there should be some form of exchange upon which the sexual activity is based. Examples of this may include the promise of a place to stay for the night, illicit substances or gifts amongst other things. Arrangements may also be more formalised, such as sugar dating scenarios discussed above. In the above I do not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of what may constitute sex work, instead I make clear here and throughout that this is often contextual and open to interpretation. In respect of this, in order to determine whether an individual had been involved in sex work, I ask participants of this study:

‘Have you ever exchanged a sexual or erotic act, for money or anything else? (This may include, but is not limited to – exchanging sex or intimate touching for money, masturbating over webcam for gifts or cash, working at a party as a butler in the buff)’

Thus, the study remained open to those involved in a wide variety of behaviour for an equally wide variety of benefits. This meant that its scope included those involved in sex work as traditionally expected, but also respected the amorphous nature of sex work outlined in the definitions above and allowed the participants to identify with behaviours as opposed to being exclusive to labels or identities.

Within this thesis I also use the terms ‘transactional sex’ and ‘exchanging sex’ interchangeably depending on the context of the discussion related to sex work. For example, I use the term ‘exchanged’ in the above quoted question posed to the male participants. The terms ‘transact sex’ and ‘exchange sex’ encapsulate the behaviours involved in sex work, though they lack any identity which may be associated with the word ‘work’. Although not comprising a whole identity, what one does for work influences the way in which identity is perceived, given that a person’s work is the role which they play within the wider cogs of society (Walsh and Gordon, 2008). These terms have been employed purposefully and again in respect of the amorphous nature of sex work, in that they leave space for those involved in the research to have identified their involvement in this arena as they wish, whether this be a significant element of their wider lifestyle, or a by-product of it.

The terms ‘transact’ and ‘exchange’ also do not exclude those who may exchange sex for incentives other than money, in the way that ‘selling sex’ may do. The term ‘selling sex’ is

also used sporadically throughout this thesis, though in any interactions with participants I have made a conscious effort to avoid it so as not to exclude transactions which did not involve money. I did, however, ask participants their preferred terminology for this issue at the beginning of interview interactions, therefore some of the data includes direct referral to the term ‘sex work’ and any variations of the term, as defined by the participants themselves.

1.1.2 Violence, harmful behaviour and National Ugly Mugs

The meaning behind the term violence and how it is applied differs between contexts. The edited collection by Cooper and Whyte (2017), for example, outlines the violence of state actions in the form of austerity cuts. Indeed, for a behaviour to be considered violent, Hamby (2017) suggests it must be intentional, unwanted, non-essential and harmful. Such a definition, and indeed work such as Cooper and Whyte’s, go beyond the basic idea of individual interpersonal violence and consider the collective violence of institutions and states. Whilst I challenge the actions and interventions of said institutions within this work by highlighting how various elements of law, policy and practice raise barriers to reporting, I refer most specifically within this study to interpersonal experiences of violence when I discuss violence. I do this primarily because I am concerned with the reporting of violence and otherwise harmful behaviour as a primary aim of the study. Interpersonal violence represents an issue which is both recognisable and subject to existing reporting structures.

Within the opening section of this chapter, I refer to sex workers disproportionate experience of physical and sexual violence, and indeed this work is very much focused on the occurrence of these behaviours as interpersonal violence. I have however, also adopted the term ‘otherwise harmful behaviour’ within the title of this work and discussions throughout. By focusing on harms as opposed to crime alone, this work is able to consider behaviours which are perceived to negatively impact the lives of male sex workers with a wider scope than crime alone permits, allowing some room for the participants involved to define the most prominent issues they experience. I further discuss the concept of harm, and zemiological perspectives focused on broader social harms, in chapters 2.4 and 6, where I critique the ability of crime and criminal justice to understand and respond to the harms experienced by male sex workers.

The adoption of the term harmful behaviour is also informed by National Ugly Mugs (NUM) and their reporting system. NUM is an organisation which offers various levels of support for sex workers and began operating in 2012 after the UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UKNSWP) were granted Home Office funding to introduce an ‘Ugly Mugs’ scheme. Similar schemes have also operated in other countries such as Australia, with grass-roots

schemes seeking to warn sex workers about potentially dangerous clients or other people. Whilst, as mentioned above, NUM offers various services for sex workers, its main function is to collect reports of incidents from sex workers, sharing details of dangerous individuals with other sex workers and also providing anonymous intelligence to the police. The range of behaviours which NUM gather information on include some which do not carry specific legal sanctions; therefore, I have mirrored its reporting system to include harmful behaviours which are not necessarily criminal. Using this framework, the behaviours considered by this study are physical violence, sexual violence, the removal and attempted removal of a condom without consent, robbery, blackmail, stalking/harassment, threatening behaviour, verbal abuse and time wasting.

In order to conceptualise how the harmful experiences of those within the study are understood by normative criminal justice responses, I utilise the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI) developed by Sherman, Neyroud and Neyroud (2016) to categorise the above experiences into the ‘most harmful’, ‘more harmful’ and ‘less harmful’. The CCHI takes sentencing guidelines to determine how harmful a particular offence is considered to be, with murder (5475 days imprisonment) considered to be a more harmful offence than robbery (365 days imprisonment), for example. Importantly, I acknowledge that this system of understanding cannot account for actual personal experiences of harm, with experiences wholly subjective and circumstantial, and potentially amplified where a victim is stigmatised in relation to their behaviours or identity. However, the use of this framework provides both a benchmark for understanding how experiences may be perceived and also a look into how harm is approached in a legal sense. I discuss the CCHI and its use in this work in more detail in section 6.2, where I introduce its background, provide further detail on its application in this study and debate its value in understanding actual and individual experiences of harm.

1.1.3 Vulnerability, exploitation and reporting

The concept of vulnerability is also discussed throughout the work and is used as a framework of understanding the risk of harm faced by sex workers within the context of transactional sexual interactions. As a concept, vulnerability is contested, therefore providing a definition is problematic in many ways. The College of Policing (2019) define vulnerability as ‘A person is vulnerable if, as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care of or protect themselves or others from harm or exploitation’. Whilst I critique this definition in chapter 2, and discuss its application in chapter 5, it is a helpful place to begin given approaches

to (female) sex work under the police vulnerability agenda, and the wider policy-based approaches which focus on violence and exploitation (see chapter 2).

It is also important that within the definition, emphasis is placed on situation or circumstances, and vulnerability is framed as rarely inherent, with anyone potentially vulnerable given the specific conditions arise. Whilst this may be contradictory given the lack of focus on structural factors which influence vulnerability within the definition (Scoular *et al.*, 2019), it neither suggests that involvement in sex work itself creates vulnerability nor that sex workers themselves are always vulnerable. My use of the term therefore, is an acknowledgement that the socio-political context within which sex workers operate and the specific, often individual, situation or circumstances give rise to risk of exploitation or harm.

The use of the term exploitation itself is common within sex work related studies though it is seldom defined. At its most basic form, exploitation is the act of an individual taking advantage of, or otherwise benefitting from the unfair treatment of, another individual (Veneziani, 2013). Whilst the premise may itself be somewhat agreed, the manifestation of what constitutes exploitation is subjective and thus debated between schools of feminist thought when considering the ‘problem’ of sex work (Beran, 2012). Indeed, as discussed above in section 1.1.1, abolitionist radical feminism places the purchase of sex itself as an exploitative act, questioning whether the sale of sex can ever be truly voluntary (see Wilson and Butler, 2014). Other commentators argue that sex work itself is not inherently exploitative and suggest rather that exploitation is a problem within its own right (see Weitzer, 2015). This debate is discussed in more detail in chapter 2, though at this point I would like to make clear that discussions of sex work as exploitation within this study are most frequently held within the context of presenting theoretical perspectives and the subscribing policy and legislative frameworks. Indeed, policy and legislative frameworks have principally been invested in targeting exploitation, as the next chapter will make clear.

It is also important to clarify what I mean by reporting in order to better understand reporting behaviours throughout this work. Reporting in the traditional sense may be perceived to involve an individual telling the police what they know about a criminal matter, whether this be their own experience of a crime or an incident which they bore witness to, or otherwise attained information of. Such a definition would, however, limit this work to criminal matters and police responses, which often do not capture the breadth of harm experienced nor the responses to said harm. Therefore, where I discuss the reporting of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours, I do so in reference to whether the individual spoke about their experience with another person. For example, reporting in this study could include the traditional method

of telling the police, as well as submitting a report to NUM, telling a support worker, an intimate partner, another sex worker or a friend. Whilst NUM (2020) recorded 991 total reports made to them in 2019, it is inherently more difficult to find national data on the prevalence of reporting within a sex work context from official police records. Therefore, the men involved in this study were made aware that it was both the formal and informal reporting streams which were of interest, allowing for some analysis of how the formality of the reporting mechanism impacts the likelihood of men coming forward with their experience.

1.1.4 Gender, masculinity, male and men

Within this work I make significant reference to the concept of gender and its influence on how sex work has historically been, and is currently, understood. As I have outlined above, this study focuses specifically on male involvement within the sex industry, therefore an understanding of gender more broadly, and of masculinity and femininity become central to the foundations of the research. Therefore, this section discusses what I mean by sex and gender, and the implications of this meaning for the study.

At their most simple, the concepts of sex and gender have categorised human beings within a binary of male and female, masculine or feminine (Cranny-Francis *et al.*, 2003). By categorising human beings in this way, specific socialised understandings are formed whereby an individual is expected to conform to the gender role which is assigned to them. Eagly (1987), in their development of a social role theory, focused on the impact of the division of labour between men and women. In this assessment, men and women are assigned roles which shape both their skills and resulting stereotypes. Within this understanding, gendered roles are social, and are therefore open both to interpretation and negotiation. Indeed, theories of gender, such as Judith Butler's (1988) theory of performativity seek to differentiate between biological sex and gender, by highlighting how gender identity and expression are understood to relate to how one both defines their gender and outwardly performs it through repetitive and meaningful actions. Gender then, becomes something which people *do* rather than something which is pre-determined or fixed. In order for humans to *do* gender there must be an understanding of what male and female is in practice outside of biological difference, and the social role theory outlined above gives rise to an understanding between expectations of masculinity and femininity. Wood and Eagly (2002:701), developing Eagly's above mentioned work on social role theory, discuss the division of labour in nonindustrial societies into masculine and feminine activities, with men expected to perform the more masculine of the labour:

‘These gender roles emerge from the productive work of the sexes; the characteristics that are required to carry out sex-typical tasks become stereotypic of women and men. To the extent that women more than men occupy roles that involve domestic activities (e.g., cooking, provision of emotional support), the associated skills, values, and motives become stereotypic of women and are incorporated into the female gender role. To the extent that men more than women occupy roles that involve economically productive activities (e.g., resource acquisition, construction of goods for exchange), the associated skills, values, and motives become stereotypic of men and are incorporated into the male gender role.’

What is evident within the above, is that the expectations of the male role are more regularly physical, whereas the female role is predominantly emotional. Indeed, Koenig (2018:1) finds that their sample perceived expectations of women to involve them being:

‘communal and avoid being dominant. Men should be agentic, independent, masculine in appearance, and interested in science and technology, but avoid being weak, emotional, shy, and feminine in appearance’.

Linking back to Butler’s (1988) theory of performativity, if an individual is able to perform these gender roles socialised within a given context, then they are able to define their own gender based on these performances and behaviours. Indeed Knights (2019:23) suggests that:

‘Masculinity is seen not as a property of any person(s) for it is recognized as a performative phenomenon that has continually to be produced and reproduced in processes where social relations are accomplished in organized situations. Nonetheless, these performatives have a series of effects that sustain some sense of a gender order but equally can be disrupted when, for example, the performance breaches binary norms of masculinity and femininity.’

Therefore, a biologically masculine body may perform femininity and a feminine gender role, as can a biologically feminine individual perform masculinity and a masculine gender role. This study is primarily concerned with those who have a male gender identity, in that it is not concerned whether the men involved are born with male genitalia, but rather that they consider themselves to be male. *Maleness* for the purposes of this study, therefore, refers

not to the body of the individual, but rather their actions, expression and their own internal perception of who they are. Although my definition of what it means to be male has left the study open for trans-male identities to participate, it must be stated here that none of those involved specifically identified their gender in this way to me. Further discussion related to this issue can be found in chapters 3 and 8.

1.1.5 Men who have sex with men

With its focus on male sex work, this study has naturally broached issues of sex between men. Within chapter 2 of this work, I cover the historical and contemporary positions on male sexuality, discussing the formation of gay subcultures and also the creation of a homosexual identity. There are, however, men whom this research is applicable to whose identity may not necessarily be congruent with this construction. For many men, sexual interactions with other men may not be primarily motivated by sexual preference necessarily, nor may they consider their sexual desire of men to align with their personal romantic desires (Persson *et al.*, 2017). I have, therefore, adopted the term ‘men who have sex with men’ where necessary. Loue (2008:3) provides a list of those who the term may apply to, highlighting:

‘those who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender; incarcerated self-identified heterosexual men who, due to their circumstances, engage in voluntary sex with other men; self-identified heterosexual men who engage in sex with other men; self-identified heterosexual men who engage in sex with other men as a means of survival during incarceration, periods of homelessness, or for economic gain; men who have sex with females and/or male-to-female transgender persons but also have sex with males; men who self-identify as “same gender loving” or “sexual freaks;” and men who self-identify as “questioning”’.

Loue’s list recognises the breadth of male identifying individuals who engage in sexual interactions with other men, though it is important that this list is not considered to be exhaustive. Sexual identity is complex, and in recognition of this I have steered clear of ascribing identity for those within the study, as far as is possible. The term ‘men who have sex with men’ itself may be considered to carry with it some layers of identity, though for the purpose of this study it offers an important identification of behaviour shared by many of the participants, who do not necessarily identify their sexual orientation in the same ways. It is also important to acknowledge here that male sex work is not an issue which is limited to men who

have sex with men, with the purchase of male sex workers services by female clients receiving increasing research attention (see Berg, Molin and Nanavati, 2019; Kingston, Hammond and Redman, 2020).

1.2 Positioning this study within sex work debates

As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter, there has been much discussion surrounding the nature of sex work, the issues which face those involved and the ways in which law and policy concerning it should be framed. In chapter 2 of this thesis, I cover the polarised debate surrounding sex work in detail, highlighting how the debate, as a whole, falls short of fully considering the position of men who themselves sell sexual services. Although my position on sex work is framed by my involvement with academic networks and organisations which support the idea of sex work as legitimate labour, this thesis does not set out to add directly to the debate between this position and those that consider sex work to be exploitation. Smith and Mac (2018) introduce their work in a similar fashion, highlighting how despite sitting on the on the side of the debate which supports sex work as legitimate labour, it is the harms experienced by those within sex work which are the focus of their book. I, like Smith and Mac (2018), do not make attempts within the work to conclude on whether sex work is right or wrong, instead focusing on the very real risk of harm faced by some of those engaged in it. The nature of my work means that there are discussions of sex work-related harm throughout which may give rise to some suggestion of there being an intrinsic relationship between the two. However, it is important to recognise that the umbrella term of sex work represents a continuum of identities, behaviours, contexts and realities where those involved may face more or less risk than others whose behaviour would also be described as sex work. Importantly, I distinguish throughout this thesis between experiences of harm which are underpinned by the socio-political approaches to elements of sex work, and those which have been argued to be inherent to sex work itself.

My position on the issue of sex work is outlined most clearly in section 3.1.3 where I discuss the dangers of labelling the issue as inherently harmful and sex workers as inherently vulnerable. Indeed, my use of the term sex work in itself is somewhat reflective of my own understanding of the sale of sex as a legitimate form of labour, though this was also a decision informed by my understanding of the stigma and negative connotations associated with the terms ‘prostitution’ and ‘prostitute’ (Benoit *et al.*, 2017). Where I do use either of these terms, it is either in aid of describing the direct sale of sexual services and therefore reflective of the

legal position, or is appropriate to the context of the specific debate or theoretical position being presented.

1.3 Thesis structure

This chapter represents the first of eight. The second chapter considers the existing literature in the key areas raised by the focus of this work. The chapter is split into four parts; beginning with a (brief) consideration of historical positions of male sexuality and sex work, continuing with a consideration of contemporary approaches to sex work, a review of what is known about male sex work and ending with a focus on the concepts of crime, harm, violence and vulnerability. In this chapter, I begin to address the third research question, relating to how existing theory seeks to explain male experiences within a sex work context.

The third outlines the methodology of the study, including a more comprehensive look at the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods outlined above, the theories of reality and knowledge guiding the study and the ethical principles which have shaped the approach which I have taken to the work.

Following this are four thematic chapters which present the data gained through the aforementioned methods. The first of which considers the behaviour and identities of the men involved in the work, analysing how they perceive their work and its significance to their lives, their perception of the inter-relationship between gender and sex work and the impact of how their involvement in sex work manifests on how they perceive their wider identity. The second focuses on the relationship between masculinity and vulnerability, highlighting how men negotiate the way in which their masculinity may be perceived by others and also how perceptions of masculinity shape their own behaviours. The discussion within these two chapters highlights how the issues of gender and masculinity, vulnerability and stigma interact to influence the ways in which men perceive both themselves and their actions, and begins to consider how these factors influence how they respond to any experiences of harmful behaviours.

The third of the findings chapters considers the men's experiences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours, highlighting a legal understanding of harm and how this understanding may not fully capture the experiences of the men involved. Within this chapter, I address the first research question of this study by outlining how violence or otherwise harmful behaviour was experienced by the men involved in this study.

The fourth findings chapter focuses on the subsequent reporting practices and perceptions of barriers to reporting, addressing the research question focused on the understandings which can be drawn from male sex workers reporting behaviours. Within this chapter, I propose a new framework of understanding barriers to reporting which considers the impact of the environment within which the individual lives their lives, the authority which governs their behaviour and the manifestation of their internalisation of these wider structural influences.

The thesis concludes with the eighth chapter, in which I summarise the key findings of this work against the research questions and objectives, outline the contributions to knowledge that I make within and highlight the implications for policy and practice. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of this work and opportunities for future research.

1.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has set the parameters of the study by introducing its context and the research questions which have guided my approach. Within, I have also provided a definition of the key terms which I refer to recurrently throughout the thesis. This includes a discussion of how I have conceptualised sex work, maleness, and harmful behaviour.

I have positioned this study within the existing sex work related debate within this chapter, though the next offers a more detailed account of the historical approaches to male sex work, the more general contemporary approach to sex work and the specific context currently faced by male sex workers. The chapter also includes a discussion of the concepts of crime, harm, violence and vulnerability, which are central to this thesis. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the gaps in any existing understandings, which I attempt to address with this study.

2 Contextualising this study

Male sex work is a phenomenon embedded within history, which transcends issues of sexuality, masculinity and social norms. Male sex workers themselves represent a group at the margins of sex work related thought, and also of responses to the potential vulnerability and risk of harm faced by those engaged in this type of work.

This study seeks therefore, to explore the lived reality of male sex workers by considering their experiences of harmful behaviour and their subsequent reporting to the police and other relevant agencies or individuals. In this chapter, I assess the relevant existing literature, explore what is known in the area and identify the gap in the existing knowledge base within which this research rests. Given the intersectionality of issues present within male sex work, within this chapter I broach themes of sexuality, masculinity, policy, practice, vulnerability and violence. Drawing on liberal feminist, radical feminist and queer theories which explain sex work, I outline the influence of ideology on the way in which the issue is framed socially and politically.

Constructed in four parts, the chapter first considers the historical perception and regulation of both male sexuality and sex work, arguing how the contemporary frameworks of understanding are informed by these. In the second part of the chapter I consider the contemporary socio-legal approaches to sex work in a broad sense. The third is focused more specifically on what is known about male sex work and the issues facing men who sell sex in the present day. One of these issues is the experience of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours with which this study is primarily concerned, and as such, the chapter will conclude with the fourth section which considers the intersections of vulnerability, violence and masculinity. By considering these issues, this chapter will highlight the creation of a policy and research landscape which mostly presents men as the problem within sex work, ignores their own potential vulnerability and largely falls short of addressing their needs.

2.1 A historical exploration of male sexuality and sex work

Although the presence of sex work has been documented in almost every society throughout time (see Weisner, 2014), the principal focus of much of the available knowledge base is limited to manifestations of female sex work (Friedman, 2014). Indeed, male participation in commercial sex has historically been more frequently discussed within the context of the purchase of services (Phoenix, 2009; Briggs *et al.*, 1996), with the power of the women's lobby working to strengthen this viewpoint (see for example Kesler, 2002; Barry, 1995). This part of

the chapter is structured thematically and chronologically. The first section discusses a shifting tolerance towards sex work and sex between men. The second considers the construction of a homosexual identity and its impact on men who have sex with men. The third then outlines legislative and social responses to the perceived moral and public health threat posed by sex work and male sexuality.

This part of the chapter will demonstrate that when men themselves are considered as the vendors of sexual services throughout history, these discussions are commonly subsumed within wider narratives of male sexuality, rather than sex work *per se*. The transactional element therefore, becomes a secondary consideration in comparison to sexual activity between men. In this framing, thought on the issue of male sex work is suppressed and is a precursor to the gendered understanding of sex work in contemporary society. Male sex work becomes an extension of the issue of sex between men, meaning that the dynamics associated with the transaction are less deeply understood than perhaps female sex work has come to be. Indeed, whilst this thesis is not concerned exclusively with male sex workers who sell sex exclusively to other men, there is little evidence within the historical discussion of female clients of male sex workers. This, however, is perhaps symptomatic of a literature base which is primarily concerned with gay history, and therefore presents male sex work through this specific lens.

2.1.1 Shifting tolerance

The history of male sex work and sex between men provides a clear grounding for the marginalisation and stigmatisation of men engaged in these activities. Social attitudes and tolerance towards the issues have undergone a substantial shift throughout history, constructing a complex position for contemporary male sex work.

In early historical assessments, some acceptance of male sex work and sex between men is evident. The practice operated legally in the brothels of Athens (Dover, 1989) and Rome (McGinn, 2004; 2013), indicating some acceptance and legitimacy. Sexual acts between men had also benefitted from a degree of legitimacy, with older men's attraction to younger men deemed to be natural (Dover, 1989; Halperin, 1990). There were, however, conditions to this seemingly tolerant position on the issue. Indeed, the concept of natural attraction was rested on the assumption that the older male adopted the 'active' role in the relationship, conforming to the dominant expectations of the masculine role. The partner assuming a 'passive' role was to be viewed less favourably, and they were expected to be a boy, woman or slave (Foucault, 1985; Dorais, 2005; Hubbard, 2013). Therefore, although there is some tolerance and legitimising ideology evident, this is clearly contingent on conformity to social rules related to

status and gender. What these social rules did was distinguish between men and men who sold sex to other men, demonstrating that even in societies recognised for their sexual permissiveness, male sex work is othered as an activity which challenges normative masculine behaviour.

This othering intensified in the periods following this, with the power granted to the church and the more general social upheaval of the time acting as the catalyst for changing attitudes to what is now understood as homosexuality and prostitution (see Stoddard, 2014; Friedman, 2014; Brooks-Gordon, 2006). Sexual relationships between men were scrutinised by ecclesiastical law, which forbade sex between men and male prostitution (Newheiser, 2015; Dauphin, 1996). This scrutiny was under the guise of a focus on the vaguely conceptualised sin of ‘sodomy’ – relating primarily to sexual acts between men – which helped compound negative attitudes towards non-heteronormative male sexuality (Mills, 2007). Importantly, however, religious hostility was not reserved only for sex between men and male sex work, with any sexual behaviour which did not lead to procreation outlined as morally wrong (Rossiaud, 1988; Karras, 1998; Halperin, 1990). This period represents a shift towards the policing of sexual behaviours based on morality, which has also been evident within contemporary approaches to sex work and sex between men.

Despite this, female prostitution appears to have continued amidst the strict moral authority, with the work recognised as a necessary sin, preventing men from carrying out other more severe sins. Demonstrating this, Karras (1989:399) quotes St. Augustine, a religious leader in the 4th and 5th centuries, in saying ‘remove prostitutes from human affairs and you will destroy everything with lust’. Male sex work was not, however, afforded this same legitimising ideology, instead coming under socio-legal scrutiny (Bray, 1982). Indeed, prostitution was not considered a part of male sexuality in the same way as it was for women (Bershady, 2014), suggesting the continued perception that male sex work digressed from normative constructions of male sexuality – with the conditional social tolerance making way to a newfound intolerance.

2.1.2 Forming and curing identities

Intense intolerance and stigma towards sex between men continued into the Renaissance period. This is most clearly identifiable in the crimes of ‘sodomy’ (relating to any sexual activities between men in this case) and ‘buggery’ (relating to anal penetration and bestiality) becoming punishable by death in England under the Buggery Act 1533 (Trumbach, 2007a).

The practice of sex between men, and indeed transactional sex, continued, however. With the stigma of the act, and its potential for legal consequences forcing men to hide their behaviours and operate in clandestine places. Molly Houses serve as an example of the early formation of a gay subculture, providing a designated safe space for the expression of homoerotic behaviours on the periphery of normative society (Norton, 1992). Relations between men again took hierarchical structures, mirroring earlier discussions of Classical societies, with the active partner frequently typically being the older man and the passive younger (Roche, 1996; Trumbach, 2007). Indeed, the issue of pederasty, and the material rewarding of the younger party, is raised in the literature concerning sex between men at this time (Roche, 1996), suggesting that the contemporary concept of 'sugar dating' is something which has been embedded in various forms throughout history. The continuation of these types of relationships, in spite of potentially heavy legal sanctions, saw men operating on the fringes of society. What this created was the flourishing of both a culture and identity for men who have sex with men (Norton, 1992), with legal and social persecution not stopping sexual practices between men, but rather influencing the ways and forms in which they were to continue.

Although the above discussed formation of a gay subculture did create some form of shared identity, it was not until the 1860's that gay, lesbian and bisexual identities, and labels of homosexuality and heterosexuality, were constructed (Cocks, 2007; Kennedy, 1997). At the same time, and despite this new acknowledgement for varying sexuality, persecution of non-heteronormative relations remained. In 1885 the Criminal Law Amendment Act defined 'acts of gross indecency', criminalising sexual acts between men in England and Wales (Weeks, 1991; Coleman, 2014). Whilst intended to modernise approaches to sex between men compared to the Buggery Act 1533, this served instead legitimise the stigmatisation of sex between men (Cocks, 2007a). In this period, male sex work remained subsumed by the more intense focus on the issue of homosexuality, with Weeks (1991:67) suggesting that 'the deviance of prostitution was supplementary to the deviance of homosexuality'. With the focus on the sexual behaviour and not the transaction, the legitimising ideology that tolerated female sex work as a necessary social evil still did not apply to men.

Following the construction of gay, lesbian and bisexual identities, and the understanding of sexuality which came with it, the male desire of another man became considered an 'unhealthy condition' (Haldeman, 1994:221). Attempts were made in this period to cure gay men and indeed, men charged with gross indecency under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 were offered aversion therapy or another form of treatment as an

alternative to imprisonment (Dickinson, 2015). The ongoing othering of non-heteronormative male sexuality, based on ideas of masculinity and religious ideology, was clear. Gay and bisexual identities, initially intended to legitimise their practice, instead compounded stigma and legitimised their treatment as conditions, demonstrating the potential harm caused by state enforced interventions on issues such as sexuality (see Valderde, 2014).

2.1.3 Contagious diseases and public morality

Though recognised as a necessary social evil, even as tolerance made way to intolerance, sex work related anxiety has been evident within social, law and policy-based responses to sex work throughout history. This section of the chapter considers a further shift in the understanding of sex work and sex between men, which saw those involved positioned as threats to health and morality, and discusses how male sex workers in particular were impacted by this new-found concern.

Concern of the threats to public health posed by sex work is clear within the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869. The legislation represented a formal recognition of the concern that sex workers presented a risk of venereal disease and had aimed to help prevent the spread of infection amongst garrison and naval towns (Coleman, 2014; Walkowitz and Walkowitz, 1973; Bartley, 2000). Interestingly, this emphasis meant that the overall purpose of the legislation was not to stop sex work, but rather to stop it having an adverse impact on society, thus supporting the idea of sex work being a necessary social evil. What is notable about this particular string of legislation is that it set out the label of a ‘common prostitute’, which could only be applied to a woman (Karras, 1998). This serves as a stark symbol of the gendered expectations around sex work. Indeed, the discussion of this period evidences the recurring rejection of prostitution as a feature of male sexuality. Combined with the persecution of homosexuality noted above, the obscuring of the male role in commercial sex means that men were simultaneously persecuted for one aspect of their work and unacknowledged in discussions of the other. Male sex work therefore, becomes subsumed within the broader issue of male sexuality, receiving little to no recognition and attention.

This is again evident within the political discussion of the 1950’s, with the commissioning of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution in 1954. Whilst being tasked with exploring potential ways of controlling homosexual behaviour and prostitution (Summers, 2004), there is a notable focus on women in discussions of sex work, which, it may be argued, represents a continuation of both the subsumption of male sex work

within the issue of homosexuality, and the popular beliefs around the gender roles which underpin understandings of sex work. Within the report there was some recognition of the issue of male sex work, with recommendations made to change the legal definition of a brothel to include both heterosexual and homosexual behaviour (Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, 1957). However, when considered alongside the relatively limited focus on male sex work, there are suggestions that any acknowledgement of the issue is reluctant and secondary to concerns relating to female sex work and homosexuality more generally.

What was made clear within the report however, was that sex work and homosexuality were to be viewed as issues which presented a threat to public morality, and this was to be the primary concern of the state when dealing with them. Somewhat controversially for the time, the report suggested that the laws place was to 'preserve public order and decency' (1957:21) rather than concern itself with private sexual behaviour. The recommendation was that sex work and sex between men in private, therefore, should no longer be criminal offences. Private behaviours, regardless of their morality were not to be the concern of the law, though these issues remained a threat to public morality if performed outside of that specific context.

Concerns related to health and morality returned to the forefront of social anxiety with the discovery of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) in the 1980's (Scott, 2003). Initially, with little known about it and with it thought to exclusively affect gay men, AIDS had been dubbed 'gay cancer' or 'GRID' (gay-related immune deficiency) (Cocks, 2007a). There were suggestions that the disease could be caught by touching the affected, and religious groups had claimed that it was inflicted upon those engaged in 'immoral' behaviour (Barnhart, 2014). This, and the developing understanding that the disease also affected intravenous drug users, contributed to AIDS becoming a highly stigmatised disease, and the marginalisation of AIDS sufferers (Barnhart, 2014; Herek, 1999). Comparisons may be drawn here with the understandings of female sex work in the late 1800's, driven by the Contagious Diseases Acts and their emphasis on sex workers as the source of venereal disease (Coleman, 2014; Walkowitz and Walkowitz, 1973). This had served to other sex workers and indeed, the impact of the AIDS crisis on men who have sex with men and male sex workers was similar, with the coming together of moral and health-based concerns positioning them as posing a particular threat to society, its norms and its values (Scott, 2003).

2.1.4 Section summary

Understandings of male sex work and sex between men have traversed through notions of conditional acceptance, outright moral condemnation and health-based social concern. Within this chapter, I have outlined the argument that male sex work has never benefited from the same legitimising ideology – as a necessary social evil – that female sex work has.

Instead, understandings of male sex work have more often been subsumed within wider understandings of male sexuality and sex between men, which in itself has helped shape contemporary gendered approaches to sex work related issues. The position of male sex work, social expectations of the broader male gender role, the religious ideal of heteronormative marital practice and a legal identification of prostitution as a women's issue have left male sex workers operating on the fringes of society.

By tracing the development of these issues through time, this section has provided an insight into the construction of present-day ideas and perceptions of male sex work, demonstrating the foundations of a social understanding which is reluctant to acknowledge male involvement in this kind of work, and which therefore does not appropriately respond to the needs and experiences of men who are involved in the industry. This contemporary position and the related theoretical discussions will be presented within the next part of the chapter.

2.2 Contemporary explanations of, and approaches to, sex work

The consideration of the historical approaches to male sex work and broader sexuality in Part 1 offered an important insight into the changing perspectives and responses throughout history, tracing the development of the social norms upon which the lens of a more contemporary society is constructed. The review of history saw the more liberal approaches of the Ancient world making way to increasingly sexually intolerant eras, with the conditional acceptance of sex work diminishing over time. This part of the literature review will demonstrate how elements of historical influence are very much evident within more contemporary theory and practice, whether manifesting within the stigma associated with sex work or the gendered understanding of the issue more broadly.

This part of the chapter aims to provide an overview of the contemporary theoretical debates, social understandings and policy approaches to sex work. This includes a discussion of feminist theorisation in this area and its influence on state responses, and an insight into some of the policing approaches which represent the most visible element of said responses.

2.2.1 Theoretical debates relating to sex work

Contemporary theoretical understandings of sex work tend to sit predominantly amongst a spectrum dominated by polarised feminist-led thought. Two, often conflicting paradigms, present sex work as either a legitimate form of labour or as a form of exploitation, and seek conflicting solutions to the sex work ‘problem’.

For example, the ‘sex as work’ paradigm, offers emphasis on the autonomy of an individual to become involved in sex work, highlighting the informed and rational decision making by many of those who work within the industry (Connelly, Jarvis-King and Ahearne, 2015). The emphasis here is on individual choice, and central to the debate is the assertion that an individual should be entitled to do with their body what they so wish, so long as any act is performed between consenting adults (Tong, 1998; Gerassi, 2015). This paradigm is most commonly associated with the liberal feminist school of thought, and those who champion the argument encourage observers to consider sex work as a form of labour, whereby the sex worker provides a form of intimate service for their client (Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). Sexual commerce is therefore legitimised as labour in this perspective, and there is emphasis on working rights and unionisation, much the way workers in other professions have benefited from. The argument made here is that by not affording sex workers the same labour rights as

other workers, they are at increased risk of harm through working conditions and issues of vulnerability which are often a by-product of the clandestine nature of sex work.

In contrast, the 'sex work as exploitation' paradigm is based around the argument that the very nature of sex work is exploitative, and that the purchase of sex provides a damning reflection of the male dominated nature of a patriarchal society (Kesler, 2002; Pateman, 1999; Farley, 2018; Barry, 1995). In this view, it is the construction of society and its oppression of women which forces women who sell sex into prostitution in one way or another, and as a consequence, no sexual transaction can be fully consensual (Tiefenbrun, 2002). It is this aspect of the perspective that critics have argued denies the agency of those working within the industry voluntarily (Lang, 2015). Sex work, and its supposed inherently exploitative characteristics, are argued by this perspective to be best dealt with by stopping the existence of the sex trade altogether, rather than improving working conditions (Beran, 2012; Nelson-Butler, 2016).

In more recent radical feminist work, Olufemi (2020:187) challenges existing discourse which advocates for the abolition of the sex trade, arguing that such a move would require a 'complete transformation of social structures'. Indeed, Olufemi questions the discussion around consent outlined above, recognising that work more broadly is an activity which is often fundamental to survival within the existing social system, and therefore any consent to labour is shaped by these social conditions. This is a departure from the narrative that clients, or men, force women into sex work, which considers the social systems which create the conditions which create the need for people to sex work. In fact, Olufemi suggests that existing approaches which target clients for forcing sex workers into selling sex are misguided, and the emphasis of any solution to better support women who sell sex should be on empowering them 'to assert their rights, protections and freedoms' (2020:184). This work represents somewhat of a break in the tradition of radical feminist thought, with it being more inclusive of sex workers themselves and accepting of the idea that the most important discussions are not around the perceived righteousness of the sale of sex, but of the safety and wellbeing of those who, for one reason or another, participate in it.

What must be noted about both positions within this polarised debate, and even of where there is more nuanced discussion, is the consistent focus on the experiences of women and the exclusion of men. Indeed, (particularly radical) feminist perspectives of sex work fall short of explaining the experiences of those who do not conform to heteronormative expectations. Although it is clear from the literature that feminist discussions are aware of male

sex work, their very nature detailed discussions on the topic as the emphasis is on male demand for sex work, rather than on them selling it themselves (Child, 2009).

Jeffreys (2008) for example discusses how it is the power differential between the male client and the sex worker which drives the transaction, regardless of the gender of the sex worker themselves. Here the claim is that it is men's subordination of women and other men which creates an environment in which prostitution exists. However, Jeffrey's suggests that a man who sells sex is not subjected to exploitation in the same way as a woman, but rather the exchange is a confirmation of his masculinity and sexual desirability. In this discordant argument, male sex work is caused by the subordination of men by other men, yet the implication is that those men selling sexual services are in some way empowered by the transaction, and by the fact that another party is willing to engage in paid sexual activity with them. The male body it seems, does not resonate with the imagery around victimhood portrayed in this work. Indeed, both Jeffreys (2008) and Barry (1984) suggest that women are exposed to a level of exploitation, resultant of the male domination of women in society, which does not affect men in equal measure. However, it is made clear that the legal and social persecution of homosexuality historically has led to the increased risk of violence and blackmail faced by men who sell sex (Jeffreys, 2008), suggesting that for some men, exploitation and the risk of harm is indeed an issue. However, this overarching framework of understanding sex work presents male needs as secondary to female needs within this space, and largely restricts the consideration of them as participating in the sale of sex themselves.

Whilst feminist theories have focused on sex industry as largely gendered, queer theorists have sought to provide nuance to this understanding. The term queer itself is one which symbolises difference, and therefore also highlights the existence of socially agreed and constructed standards, held as the norm. Scholars such as Weeks (1977), Rubin (1984) and Foucault (1978;1985) outline the institutional normalisation of heterosexuality and the resultant suppression of sexual identities which do not conform to the heteronormative standard. Whilst not actually representing a single strand of theory, queer studies generally concern themselves with 'the deconstruction and the refusal of labels of personal sexual activity' (Whittle, 2005:117). It is argued, and has also been evident within historical discussions above, that these labels are institutionalised and serve to suppress identities which do not conform to expected behaviours and presentations.

To think queerly about an issue then, is to challenge normativity, and indeed the application of queer thought to the sex industry challenges and extends existing theoretical understandings of sex work. Whilst feminist principles have set out important discussions of

the influence of patriarchy on gender relations and the sale and purchase of sex, both arguably fall short of truly recognising the heterogeneous nature of the sex industry and the subjugation of masculine gender identities. Indeed, feminist theoretical explanations of sex work have drawn criticism for their failure to consider non-heteronormative arrangements (Smith, Laing and Pilcher, 2015). It is difficult to find a place for men who sell sex within a debate which places sex work as something which women do, and men buy. Whilst feminist debates acknowledge male sex workers, there is little effort to properly explain their realities.

A queer challenge of sex work related thought has two distinct purposes; the first being that it brings into focus the non-heteronormative interactions which are often left out of the above feminist discussion, and the second being that it reframes discussions around inequality which have been limited to gender, to support a better consideration of the impact of the other social and institutional factors which also underpin power hierarchies within society, such as sexual identity, race and class. Whilst I do not adopt a queer lens specifically to this work, it is an important concept to consider in understanding the lived realities of those who, in some form, challenge heteronormative practices. The discussions within this work, by their very nature, add to the queering of sex work related thought by considering the reality of men as the sellers of sexual services and also men as potentially vulnerable to the risk of harm within this given context.

2.2.2 (Abolitionist) Radical feminist influence, law and policy

The influence of an abolitionist radical feminist perspective of sex work as exploitation is evident in policy and law in England and Wales, as well as further afield in countries such as Sweden and the United States (Gerassi, 2015; Weitzer, 2015). Indeed, Weitzer (2013) discusses the success of the radical feminist movement, supported by the religious right, which worked to conflate the issues of sex work and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The success of this movement, Weitzer argues, has led to a zero tolerance, prohibitionist stance to sex work in all states of the U.S bar Nevada. Here, both the purchase and sale of sex are criminalised. In Sweden there has been discussions of a similar success for radical feminist thought, where an abolitionist stance which decriminalises the sale of sex and criminalises its purchase has been taken. The aim of this framework is to target the purchaser of sex, stopping prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation by criminalising the demand for sex work (Levy and Jakobsson, 2014). It is argued that the adoption of such a framework in Sweden came as a result of the successful women's movement, which

highlighted prostitution and trafficking as expressions of male violence towards women (Gould, 2001).

In both examples, the intended focus is argued to fall on the protection of sex workers from exploitation through reducing their involvement, with participation itself considered to be inherently exploitative. What is notable about these legal approaches, and their influence by radical feminist thought, is that the victim of exploitation is typically considered to be female, with men often not fitting the mould of the stereotypical victim of exploitation (Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2014). In following a radical feminist approach and depicting sex work as the exploitation of women by men, questions are raised as to where men may fit into discussions of sex work if not as sex workers themselves. In fact, it may be suggested that it is the ideological influences, such as radical feminism, which have largely contributed to the lack of focus on male sex workers in research and policy responses up until now (for further discussion see section 2.3.4.3).

The issue of exploitation has been a key driver of the legislative response in England and Wales. Indeed, tackling exploitation has been touted as the Governments legislative aim when it comes to prostitution (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2016). In the sex work debate, who can be considered the exploiters of sex workers can vary with the theoretical stance taken, however in legal terms those considered as the exploiters are ‘those who recruit others into prostitution for their own gain or someone else’s by charging offences of causing, inciting or controlling prostitution for gain, or trafficking for sexual exploitation’ (ibid: 8). Despite much of the policy framework intending to target those who control and incite prostitution, profiting from the exploitation of others, the promise to tackle the demand for the sex industry has focused most intently on persecuting the clients of sex workers (Sagar and Jones, 2014). This was particularly evident in the *Paying the Price* (Home Office, 2004) document, and the *Coordinated Prostitution Strategy*, which both arguably reflect the success of the radical feminist debate by portraying sex work as an issue of exploitation, portraying women as victims and men as the perpetrators of exploitation. *Paying the Price* was perhaps the most significant review into sex work since the *Wolfenden* report, however it did not properly consider the changing nature of sex work in the early 2000’s and since the more widespread use of the internet, instead focusing on women exploited through street-based sex work.

The current legal framework for prostitution in England and Wales does not criminalise the sale of sex, nor its purchase, between consenting adults. Following the principles outlined in the *Wolfenden* Report, the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2016) highlighted

that it is activities such as controlling or managing prostitution, public nuisance offences or exploitation which should come under legal scrutiny, rather than the sale or purchase of sex itself. There remain however, complexities which make it difficult for a sex worker to operate without committing one of a number of criminal offences (Sanders, O'Neill and Pitcher, 2009; Hubbard and Scoular, 2009). For example, Section 16 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 states that it is an offence for an individual to, '(whether male or female) persistently to loiter or solicit in a street or public place for the purposes of offering services as a prostitute'. There is a complexity here for sex workers, stemming from the reality that although it is legal to sell sex, many will be in conflict with the law at some point of the transaction. This legal approach, described as neo-abolitionist (see Scoular and Carline, 2014), utilises this legal complexity in order to make the sale of sex more difficult, in what may be considered an attempt to reduce its incidence (Phoenix, 2009). Such complexities also extend to indoor sex working, with it being illegal for more than one person to offer sexual services out of the same premises, but completely legal for one. By legal definition, two or more sex workers working out of the same address would be in conflict with section 33A of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, for operating a brothel (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019). This part of the law becomes even more complex when it is considered that a sex worker can legally sell sex in a brothel, providing that they are not involved with the management of the establishment (Sanders, 2009).

What is clear of both the private and public sale of sex is just how *unclear* the legislative framework for sex work related behaviours is. There remain confusing distinctions between acceptable and criminal behaviours which influence an environment which dictates both how commercial sex can be arranged and also how the services can be delivered. Importantly, such a contradictory legislative outlook may be difficult to understand, therefore some involved in the sale of sex may do so under the impression that they are committing offences by doing so. Indeed, there may be some involved with selling sex who are committing offences. This potential conflict with the law may prove a potential barrier to seeking the support of those who enforce it, or even those perceived to hold authority in other forms.

In more recent times, there has been some variance in the political discussion surrounding sex work, with the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee (2016) report making it clear that the issues of consensual sex work and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation should be treated separately, and not conflated as had been seen in earlier publications. Making recommendations around the legal framework in England and Wales, the report suggests that the laws against soliciting and brothel keeping are counterproductive and should be amended, whilst also stating that the feeling was that criminalising the purchase of

sex would not be productive in improving the safety of sex workers. In contrast to the way in which sex work had been approached up until this point, there was some consideration for the decriminalisation of sex work in England and Wales, with the report discussing the merits of the approach in New Zealand where the laws around sex work which made it illegal to sell sex such as that pertaining to soliciting were removed (see for example Barnett *et al.*, 2010; Abel, 2018). Despite this shift in discussion, the report argues in favour of maintaining the laws which target those who manage sex work establishments or exploit sex workers, in line with the stated aim in this legislative area.

Since the publishing of the report in 2016, the discussion and subsequent advice from MP's has seen a change of direction, with then Chair of the Committee Keith Vaz stepping down after a press campaign had revealed his purchasing of the services of male sex workers. The more recent All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade (2018) report again saw the conflation of the issues of sex work and human trafficking. The recommendations, including making the purchase of sex a criminal offence in all settings, return to the aim of combating exploitation and trafficking by preventing the sale of sex. The measures against trafficking and exploitation recommended by the report include the suggestion that England and Wales should follow the lead of the United States and target websites which profit from allowing sex workers to advertise their services, such as Adultwork and Vivastreet (APPG on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade, 2018). The report may draw criticism because of its conflation of the issues of sex work and trafficking, but for male sex workers in particular the report once again falls short of considering their involvement in the industry, identifying the issue of trafficking and sex work as 'a highly gendered crisis' (ibid: 4). Whilst it is not a novel argument that trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation does disproportionately affect women, the solutions provided within this report are sure to also impact the work of male sex workers and women choosing to sell sex *en masse*, and it is fair therefore, to suggest that both should have been granted more consideration within the discussion.

Whilst this previous point refers to choice, it is important to acknowledge that choice itself is not binary. In their Home Office commissioned research, Hester *et al.* (2019) refer to how choices to sell sex are made based on socioeconomic, health based, and wider pressures faced by those involved. Choice is rarely absolute, and any decision made is based on these wider factors which influence decision making. In a departure from these previous policy documents detailed within this section, this more recent work acknowledges the complexity of sex work and is critical of binary approaches which treat sex workers as either victims of

exploitation or empowered autonomous individuals. Importantly however, this work again continues the lack of attention afforded to male sex workers which has characterised the political response to sex work. Indeed, there were male sex workers involved within the research upon which the report was based, though the authors rely upon their participants mentioning of this fact, rather than explicitly capturing data on gender. This approach led to a count of 529 female respondents, 13 male and 8 non-binary or trans respondents, moulded by the presumption of gender based on the answers provided to questions not directly relating to gender.

However, it must be noted here that it is not only men who are left out of much of the debate related to sex work, with sex workers and organisations who represent them often excluded from policy discussions, in the name of pushing forward a state response founded upon concerns related to the exploitation of women. For example, a combined report by NUM, the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) and Umbrella Lane highlighted how:

‘sex workers and the organisations they trust are often subject to exclusionary politics and practices that block us from contributing details and nuance to prevent the (unintended) harms of policies developed without this population.’

(Bowen *et al.*, 2021)

Such exclusionary politics have been evident elsewhere (see for example Levy and Jakobsson, 2014), where sex workers voices are drowned out by those speaking on their behalf about the perceived morality of the sex industry and tying the issue into debates of violence against women. Because of this, the sex work debate and subsequent response falls short of addressing the realities of sex work and improving the conditions in which sex workers offer their services. This work seeks to address this gap in the literature by better understanding the lived realities of male sex workers, and their potential vulnerability to harmful behaviours facilitated by the context within which sex work exists.

2.2.3 Policing sex work

Interactions between sex workers and the police are said to be underpinned by an expectation from sex workers that they will not receive respectful treatment, owing to the stigmatised status of the activity (Klambauer, 2017). Indeed, historically, sex work has been treated as an issue of vice, with sex workers themselves considered primarily as offenders (Sanders *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, clients of sex workers have been portrayed and policed as the deviant other, in need

of curing of their abnormal sexual desire (see Sanders, 2009a). With sex work having been approached as something which is morally and legally wrong, despite more contemporary changes in approach, interactions with the police are a fairly common experience for some sex workers.

The framework of sex work regulation in England and Wales, and the potential for criminal behaviours associated with the sale of sex, has meant that sex work remains on the radar of police forces. There has been particular policing attention paid to street-based sex work, with powers granted within the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 intended to further equip the Police in dealing with behaviours thought to impact the wider community (Kingston and Thomas, 2015). The orders; Police Dispersal Orders, Community Protection Notices and Criminal Behaviour Orders, replaced Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, which were previously utilised as part of the wider attempts to control the behaviour of sex workers (see for example Sagar, 2007).

It is argued that the use of these orders against sex workers, alongside the criminal sanctions for loitering and soliciting, work only to force them out of public spaces (Klambauer, 2017). For example, a Police Dispersal Order is designed to give the Police the power to direct an individual to leave a certain area, and not return within a given timeframe (South Wales Police, 2019). An individual breaking the terms of an order may face a fine, or in more serious cases, imprisonment. This method of dispersal and displacement, a continuation of the approach seen with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, has been criticised as being ineffective (Campbell, 2016). Just how effective such an approach can be for fulfilling the state's goal of reducing prostitution is indeed questionable, with initial participation in the sex industry in particular often fuelled by financial needs, and sex workers having to return to work to avoid the penalty for failing to pay a fine (see for example Sagar, 2007). Whilst this area of policing may not be delivered under the guise of 'vice squads', there is a clear emphasis on public morality. Indeed, noteworthy of the anti-social behaviour focused policing approach, is its unrelenting attention on the sectors of the sex industry most visible to the public eye.

The police approach to indoor sex work has been markedly different, with less emphasis on anti-social behaviour and public order, and more of a focus on exploitation and those profiting from prostitution. Throughout England and Wales, many establishments, whilst being known to authorities, are allowed to operate without regular interruption (Matthews, 2005). Police involvement with indoor sex work premises then, is often framed as being limited to visits ensuring those working within the premises are doing so on their own free will, with particular attention paid to those identified as potential victims of trafficking (Klambauer,

2017). Periodically however, Police interventions related to indoor establishments have seen crackdowns on ‘brothels’ as part of modern-day slavery enquiries. The crackdowns, although primarily packaged as being focused on the behaviours of those running the establishments, have had a knock-on effect on those working within them, including the loss of earnings whilst the premises are disrupted, and a potential increase in vulnerability, with closures preventing the safeguards of sex workers working within the same premises (Doward, 2011). Indeed, there is some concern that such visits from figures of authority may result in sex workers themselves becoming the focus of scrutiny, with immigration and visa related issues at times uncovered within visits primarily framed as being about sex worker welfare (McBride *et al.*, 2019).

The recent focus of the national policing strategy for prostitution and sex work has primarily involved harm minimisation for those involved in the sex industry, with both of the latest sets of guidance released highlighting the need for the police to approach sex workers as a potentially vulnerable group, rather than as offenders themselves (Holland, 2015; Vajzovic, 2019). The earlier guidance in particular also highlights the negative impact that brothel raids or closures might have on the trust between sex workers, services and the police. Interestingly, whilst not directly discussing the impact of brothel raids or closures, the latest guidance acknowledges that the public interest must be taken into account when enforcing brothel keeping laws, particularly in the case of two sex workers sharing a premise for reasons of safety. Both the targeting of sex workers for anti-social behaviour related issues and the disruption of indoor premises, in cases where there is no evidence of exploitation, are in direct conflict with the national policing guidance related to sex work.

Despite this, there is evidence of a continuing disparity between local level policing strategies and national level guidance. Discussing this more recent guidance, Scoular and colleagues (2019:231) suggest that:

‘Police forces on the ground are often not aware of this guidance and many tend to set their view of sex work and consequent actions in the framework of either modern slavery (or sometimes human trafficking), or public nuisance.’

Police in Swansea under operation Jaeger, for example, promised to ‘clamp down on soliciting’ by prosecuting sex workers who refuse to engage with support services (South Wales Police, 2019). South Wales Police suggest that this enforcement approach aims to work towards ‘improving access to services’. However, Swansea Women’s Aid, who run the Support Wellbeing Advocacy and Enablement (SWAN) Project that works with sex workers in

Swansea, suggest that this approach would have the opposite effect and would rather deter the women that they work with from accessing services (Swansea Women's Aid, 2019). Under the guise of vulnerability, this enforcement approach both stigmatises sex workers as a population inherently needing specific support, and also works to criminalise them when they do not accept it.

Other policing approaches have been more successful in building better relationships between sex workers and the authorities. Merseyside police, for example, have responded to crimes against sex workers under a hate crime framework (see Campbell and Sanders, 2021). The model extends protections for sex workers who face violence and other criminal behaviour, whilst also shifting policing focus onto acts committed against them, as opposed to their own work-related behaviours (Campbell, 2014; 2016). Despite the response being somewhat reactive - indeed Campbell suggests that is not a complete solution to violence against sex workers despite its promise - it is in line with the wider NPCC focus on harm minimisation in this area. Similarly, West Yorkshire Police were amongst the organisations responsible for introducing a Managed Approach to sex work in the Holbeck area of Leeds. The Managed Approach related to sex workers being able to work without fear of arrest, should their work meet certain conditions. For example, sex work was only tolerated after 8pm and before 6am within the area, indecency would not be tolerated, along with drug use, trafficking, organised crime and coercion (Roach *et al.*, 2020). A review into the Managed Approach by Roach and colleagues found that it had helped increase the trust between sex workers and authority figures, and was the most effective model in reducing 'the impact of problems associated with on-street sex working' (2020: 12). Indeed, both the Holbeck model, and the Merseyside, represent a policing of the contextual risk of harm faced by sex workers, rather than policing of sex work *per se*. This shift in focus may not represent the whole solution, though may be of some use to the national policing priority which looks to 'maximise safety and increase trust and confidence' (Vajzovic, 2019: 4).

Important to note of these, and earlier discussed policing approaches however, is that the policing of sex markets in public spaces and within establishments is likely to limit police attention primarily to female sex workers, with male sex work beats or establishments being less in number and visibility in England and Wales (see for example Kaye, 2007; Landers *et al.*, 2014; McCabe, 2005). As I suggest in the first section of the literature review, male sex work has historically been subsumed within the issue of male sexuality more broadly, which has meant that male sex workers have been policed primarily for their sexual interactions, with

the transactional elements of these interactions less understood (Crofts and Orchistan, 2021). Sanders and colleagues (2020:2), do however, suggest that:

‘There has been some acknowledgement by authorities of the diversity of populations in sex work and the need for specific groups such as transgender and male sex workers to be considered in relation to exploitation, harm and the role of the police.’

Importantly, this acknowledgement should translate to approaches which better identify the needs of such groups of sex workers, shifting understandings from sex work being an issue of the exploitation of women to considering the potential impact on those with male and transgender identities. Although men involved in sex work may benefit somewhat from escaping the criminalising approaches taken by some sections of the police, it may be argued that the lack of attention which has been afforded to them and their potential vulnerability to harm may only serve to increase the division between them and the police, in turn preventing the fostering of any ongoing positive working relationships which facilitate their ongoing engagement and reporting of their experiences. Whilst this may be seen as beneficial by some male sex workers, for some it may mean finding and accessing support more difficult when it is needed.

2.2.4 Section summary

What is evident within the current legislative, policy, academic and policing approaches to sex work, is a continuation of the gendered approach which has limited any recognition of male sex work. Indeed, the discussions within this part of the chapter begin to highlight how existing theory seeks to explain male experiences within a sex work context.

The theme which has run throughout the majority of this part of the chapter, is that male identities are considered to be wholly problematic within many discussions of the nature of sex work, therefore their needs are rarely considered within any potential solution to the sex work ‘problem’, regardless of how the ‘problem’ is defined. Importantly, the ways in which sex work is approached, that I have documented throughout this part, are problematic not only for male sex workers who are largely ignored, but also for women who do not necessarily subscribe to the portrayal of their identity and circumstance projected by the debate. It is important, therefore, that any debate related to sex work moves away from gendered and binary notions, appreciating the realities of men and non-female gendered persons within the industry,

highlighting both their existence and their plight in the face of current understandings which exclude them and their needs.

The next part of chapter 2 is focused on male involvement in the sex industry, reviewing existing understandings of those engaged in the industry and of the potential issues that they face in the context of the work. This includes issues of stigma and their position within the theoretical and policy related sex work debate discussed within this part of the chapter.

2.3 Male sex work

With the assumption that the male role within a sexual transaction is most often limited to the demand, the male role as provider of sexual services goes under acknowledged, and the understanding of the lived reality of men who sell sex remains limited. Without an understanding of the lived reality of male sex workers themselves, policy and support service approaches will continue to be informed primarily by what is known about female sex work, and approaching male sex work in this way may mean that significant issues are not represented within the response. This section will consider what is known about the male role as provider of sexual services, offering comparisons to female sex work within discussions of the number of male sex workers, the venue in which men seek clients to their services and their relevant personal characteristics. There is also a consideration of the issues faced by men who sell sex, including that of HIV and sexual health, the stigmatisation of their sexual behaviours and their position within the policy framework outlined in the previous part of this chapter.

2.3.1 Male involvement in sex work

Given the clandestine nature of sex work, and also the transience of those involved in it, it is difficult to estimate involvement in the sex industry. The figures presented here therefore, may not represent the true number of those involved, nor their respective genders. It is however, important to consider estimated figures, given that responses are often based upon the perceived scale of the issue.

It is also important to consider the figures which estimate male involvement, given the assumption that sex work is a gendered industry. Indeed, it is no surprise that men are considered to make up the minority of the 72,800 plus people thought to be selling sexual services in the United Kingdom (Parliament, 2016; Brooks-Gordon, Mai and Sanders, 2015), given the position within which men sit in understandings of sex work. Quoting figures provided by the earlier APPG on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade report (2014) and evidence submitted by the Sex work Research Hub, the Prostitution enquiry suggested that reported statistics had placed male involvement at 5 per cent and 17 per cent respectively (Parliament, 2016). Although these estimates suggest that the population of male sex workers is by far less than the population of female sex workers, there have however been conflicting figures reported which suggest that the gender makeup of the sex industry is not as clear cut as these suggest, as is also acknowledged in the enquiry.

For instance, a report concerning the contribution prostitution makes to the UK economy suggested that men made up 42 per cent of those working in the U.K (import.io, 2014). In line with these findings, an assessment of the online profiles of sex workers in Wales between 2010 and 2014, found that male and transgender sex workers made up 40 per cent of the profiles studied (Sagar *et al.*, 2014). Important to note about both of these studies is that although they do present a somewhat surprising analysis of the gender makeup of the sex industry, they are limited in their scope and far different conclusions may have been reached had they considered sex work establishments and the street-based sector. Indeed, further research, which is again focused on the online sector but this time utilising an online survey, found men made up 19 per cent of the responding online based sex workers (Sanders *et al.*, 2018). Although these findings do represent a significant departure from the other online studies highlighted which highlight male involvement closer to 40 per cent, there is a repeated indication that men make up a larger proportion of those selling sex than may initially be considered, particularly where the online market is considered.

In work which was not limited to an internet-based environment, Sagar and colleagues (2015) find that 5 per cent of male respondents to their survey had been involved in the sex industry, compared to 3.4 per cent of their female respondents. Like the previously presented statistics, this may present a somewhat surprising finding, with the figure of male involvement higher than that of female involvement. The study was however, focused on the experiences of students exclusively, and therefore cannot be generalised to the overall sex work population. The statistics presented here, focused on the online and student sex work markets, may not represent a true depiction of the makeup of the wider sex work population and other venues of selling sex such as on the street or in establishments, which may see a larger percentage of female workers. What can be suggested with the available figures, however, is that it is extremely difficult to gauge exactly how many men do sell sex, and exactly how much of the entire sex industry their involvement makes up. Despite this difficulty, there is a clear suggestion that men make up, at the very least, a significant minority of the sex work industry, despite dominant discourses around its stereotypically gendered presentation.

2.3.2 Venues

It is clear from the existing literature that male sex workers, like their female counterparts, explore various venues in order to meet clients for commercial sex. Of the various venues in which commercial sex is offered, street-based sex working is the most visible of all the forms

and is perhaps the most recognisable and portrayed image of sex work in popular culture (Brown and Sanders, 2017). Significantly, the focus of many research efforts, policy frameworks and police interventions has been on street-based sex work (Bimbi, 2007). A result of the focus of research on street-based sex work is a disparity of knowledge between this way of sex working and any other form of sex work which takes place in a more private environment, despite there being a shift in focus of sex work related academia in recent years which has seen a significant emphasis on off-street and online working (see for example Sanders *et al.*, 2018; Morris, 2018).

Exploring the public space of the street as a venue for arranging commercial sexual interactions is a practice which has more commonly been associated with female sex workers than male (UKNSWP, 2008), however there remains some suggestion within the literature that men do indeed explore a public environment as space within which commercial interactions can be arranged (Kaye, 2007; Landers *et al.*, 2014; Leary and Minichiello, 2007; McCabe, 2005; Ellison and Weitzer, 2017). Presented similarly to the way in which female street sex work has been, street-based male sex work has been characterised within the existing literature as reflecting ‘survival sex’ practices, with themes of homelessness, substance misuse and histories of abuse more common than in the narrative of those involved with other forms of sex working (Ellison and Weitzer, 2017; Davies and Feldman, 1999). Despite this commonality, inherent differences between the characteristics of male and female street-based sex work have also been presented. Atkins and Laing’s (2012) work, which draws on two studies and focuses on the spaces within which commercial and non-commercial sex between men occurs, suggests that the men who participated in their research had ways of discreetly finding commercial sexual encounters, walking between areas and blending into the surroundings, rather than standing around and waiting for business. In their example, male sex workers are presented by Atkins and Laing as being hidden amongst plain sight, visible only to those who know what to look for. This is perhaps in part related to the spatial mobility which Ellison and Weitzer (2017) suggest that male sex workers utilise and that female street-based sex workers lack. In their study, they note how the men involved use a variety of means to seek business, actively pursuing clients rather than passively awaiting their approach. Within this, Ellison and Weitzer discuss the gay social scene as a space in which clients may be met. The fluidity and overlap of the gay social and male sex work scene has also been noted by Crofts and Orchistan (2021), who suggest that this has been influenced by the historical persecution of sex between men. The gay social scene represents a relatively safe space for men seeking sex with men and male sex workers to operate, given the understanding of who is using the space. Further work has

identified male sex workers use of the gay social scene, including Hall (2007) who describes the ‘barfly’ sex work typology. As described by Hall, the ‘barfly’ frequents bars and offers sex for a material or financial reward, including drinks, drugs or a place to stay for the night.

What may be suggested of bar based male sex work, is that it offers a far more sociable setting for selling sex than the often-isolated world of street-based sex working. A participant in a study by Ellison and Weitzer (2017:9) suggested that they frequented a bar in order to offer commercial sex, and that ‘there’s always somebody to chat to’. It is in the gay commercial scene in particular that paid sexual encounters are often opportunistic in nature, and is something which Ellison and Weitzer refer to as an ‘extension of their gay or bisexual identity’ (2017:13). With such suggestions, it is apparent that bar based male sex work is more of a social practice than ‘traditional’ sex work, within which men seize a presenting opportunity to make money or other material gains.

Less opportunistic, and more organised, the role of the escort is characterised by the provision of both sexual and companionship services (Griffith *et al.*, 2016). Those engaged in this practice may advertise their services independently, or with the support of an agency. For those supported by an agency, clients are typically dealt with by the agency and in turn for this, a percentage of the sex workers earnings is typically charged by the agency (Smith, Grov and Seal, 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2015). Commonly suggested within the literature concerning male agency-based sex work, is the community setting which can be offered by such an arrangement, where male sex workers are brought together within an environment where those present understand their work, and are less likely to pass judgement on their peers (Smith *et al.*, 2015; Smith and Seal, 2008; Smith, Grov and Seal, 2008). Such a sense of community may understandably be lacking for men involved in the more isolated forms of sex working, though these are often dictated by their anonymity concerns.

Previously, when discussing the overall involvement of men in the sex industry, it was noted that men made up a large percentage of the total of sex workers who advertised their services online. This may in part be attributed to the potential for the internet to allow a sex worker to advertise remotely, and remain mostly anonymous in their work (Scott *et al.*, 2005). By ensuring their anonymity a male sex worker is able to mitigate issues such as stigma (discussed in section 2.3.4.1) or police involvement, which may be seen as an attractive proposition to those engaging in, or looking to engage in, commercial sex. Another potential benefit of using the internet to advertise sexual services is the wide exposure to potential clients which can be offered there. An example of this is provided by Uy *et al.* (2004) who describe their search for male escorts online as effortless, claiming that they are more accessible and

visible than ever. Importantly in this example, this increase in visibility for male sex workers is mostly limited to those who they are intending to be visible to, for the purpose of arranging transactions. A study by Mclean (2013) also offers interesting insight into online male escorting, highlighting a number of advantages to advertising services online rather than on the street or through an agency. The discussion included the level of anonymity, the degree of convenience and the potential for greater economic reward which may be present in independent online escorting, with the sex worker not having to sacrifice any of their income to an agency. Another advantage of working using the internet suggested by McLean in a later study (2015), is the element of control that an internet based male sex worker has over their work, including when they work, who they see, what information is published on their online profile and when they want to withdraw their involvement and remove the advertisement. Indeed, flexibility using the internet was also noted by Callander and colleagues (2021), who suggested that male escorts were able to ‘pivot’ their offering during the COVID-19 pandemic to offer indirect and technologically facilitated services.

What is evident from the existing literature is that, like women, men explore a variety of sectors in order to meet with, and provide services to, clients. Despite this being true of both male and female workers, differences in the way in which men and women explore these spaces have been noted within existing discussions, with it apparent that men are more fluid in their choice of sector and their pursuit of business. This fluidity not only allows them to socialise and find prospective clients, but may also facilitate the use of space as a form of safety measure, opening up a more social and public scene for their work, which does not attract the same attention as female street-based work does. It is also clear that men are significantly engaging with the online sector, as demonstrated by the figures presented in the previous section and the existing literature in this one. It may be suggested that both the fluid use of space, and the engagement with the internet to facilitate transactions, contribute to the continued hidden nature of male sex work. Although these spaces support the maintenance of anonymity and perhaps also avoidance of criminalisation, it may be argued that they also serve to increase the risk of harm and vulnerability faced by male sex workers who remain isolated from the measures and agencies who work to negotiate these issues.

2.3.3 Characteristics

In discussing the fluidity displayed by the male sex workers in their study, Ellison and Weitzer (2017) highlight how lifestyle traits may have limited how the female sex workers under

consideration were able to interact with other modes of attracting clients. Indeed, it may be suggested that the sector in which an individual offers transactional sex is often dependent upon their own personal circumstances and characteristics. Traits such as substance and alcohol dependency and misuse, homelessness, social status, education levels, age, ethnicity and sexual preference are all considered to influence the sector within which a sex worker operates (see for example Smith and Grov, 2011; Timpson *et al.*, 2007; Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013; Bar-Johnson and Weiss, 2014).

Minichiello, Scott and Callander (2013) for example, suggest that male street sex workers tended to have a lower level of education than those who worked off street in their study, which is perhaps indicative of a street-based sex worker having less options in terms of 'regular' employment, related to their relative lack of education. Indeed, the authors also claim that male street-based workers are more likely to report money problems, which is perhaps linked to their limited 'legitimate' work opportunities. Similarly, Smith and Grov (2011) highlight that men who sell sex on the street are more likely to cite issues with housing, and also those associated with alcohol and substance misuse, than men working in other sectors. This is something also suggested of female sex work, perhaps indicating similar pathways for male and female street-based sex workers, despite the differences in gender (see for example Mellor and Lovell, 2011). The link between these particular characteristics and street-based sex work are echoed within work by Timpson and colleagues (2007), who report that of the 179 male street-based sex workers involved in their study, only a few had finished high school, almost a third lived on the streets and almost all of the men were engaged in high levels of substance misuse. What is apparent within their findings, is that many of the street-based participants are engaged in what may be understood as a survival strategy rather than a long-term career solution, though there are a number of suggestions elsewhere that male participation in other sectors of the sex work industry is more common, with street-based work perhaps making up a minority of the true picture of male sex work.

The ways in which men interact with the sex industry may be indicative of their wider lifestyle. For example, it has been suggested men who sell sex online experience less problems with regards to substance misuse (Bar-Johnson and Weiss, 2015), evidence perhaps of selling sex online being less so characterised by short term money needs, but more so by rational decision making and longer term planning. Although Ellison and Weitzer (2017) do find an element of fluidity between settings, men facing issues such as substance use or homelessness may find themselves less able to capitalise on such opportunities, and indeed be more limited

in terms of their work options. The influence of characteristics may also extend to the acts offered by a male sex worker, or indeed the prices charged for their services.

For example, Logan (2010) claims that the men in his study with a more muscular build were likely to earn a premium. Logan also states that there is a premium for behaviours such as being the ‘top’ (insertive) partner in intercourse rather than the ‘bottom’ (receptive). This suggests that more masculine characteristics may be more favourable to a client seeking the services of a male sex worker and are likely to encourage a premium. The sexual behaviours offered by a male sex worker may also be determined by their own personal sexual preferences. For example, studies which have included the views of heterosexual men who sell sex to men have noted that they have certain methods of protecting their own masculine identity, including not being the receptive partner, not disclosing their sexual relationships with men and adopting an exaggerated masculinity in order to compensate for their sexual relationships with men (Cenk, 2010; Padilla, 2008). Personal sexual preference and sexual identity may also influence the context in which an individual sells sex. For example, Ellison and Weitzer (2017) note that heterosexual men are more likely to be engaged in sex work as a survival strategy, compared to gay or bisexual men who are rather more opportunistic in their sex work. Here, Ellison and Weitzer argued that motivations for selling sex differ, with heterosexual men purely seeking a financial incentive, and gay and bisexual men adopting commercial sex as part of their sexual identity, and opportunistically gaining money and other incentives. This is not to say however that the sexual orientation of a male sex worker guarantees both their motivation for engaging in sex work and their career trajectory (Baral *et al.*, 2015), with participation in the sex industry for men often being sporadic, regardless of sexual orientation.

2.3.4 Key issues

Involvement in sex work and association with the sex industry may well present issues for an individual, regardless of their gender. This section considers some of the key issues faced by male sex workers in their working lives, as has been reported within the existing knowledge base. The specific issues considered are the impact of stigma and its amplification within the issue of male sex work, HIV and sexual health which has tied together issues of male sexuality and sex work and the impact of the gendered approach to sex work on the position of male sex workers within policy, legislation and service delivery. Like in previous sections, I do not intend to generalise the experiences of all men who sell sex, though it is important to

acknowledge that there is some shared experience of the issues discussed, and they are therefore a concern which this work must consider and address.

2.3.4.1 Stigma

Goffman (1963:3) refers to stigma as a ‘deeply discrediting attribute’, an attribute which distinguishes an individual from the normative standard set within wider social values. Stigmatised traits are separated into three forms by Goffman, relating to the character, the body and the social connections of the individual. A sex worker may experience stigma at a number of levels; be it related to their behaviour which digresses from the standards of normative sexual behaviour and what is expected within a nuclear sexual relationship, or through the persistent narratives that sex workers are the carriers of disease, possess loose morals and are socially deviant, detailed throughout the historical overview which began this chapter (see for example Coleman, 2014; Weeks, 1991).

The social context within which sex work exists means that those involved in all aspects of the transaction face stigmatisation at some level (Weitzer, 2018). It is that which is faced by the sex worker themselves, which is most pertinent to this study and perhaps most significant. The stigmatisation of sex work related activities has been explored as a barrier to seeking and accepting support (see Sanders, 2007; Cusick and Berney, 2005; Stardust *et al.*, 2021), and there has also been consideration of how such a scenario increases the risk of harm faced by sex workers as consequence (Benoit *et al.*, 2017). The already complex issue of stigma, which has real practical implications for those involved in transacting sex, becomes even more so where male involvement is considered. Whilst in Goffman’s analysis of stigma a sex worker might be at odds with society’s expectation of normative sexual behaviour because of the transaction involved, a male sex worker also faces the added layer of the stigma related to his assumed sexual behaviour with other men. Minichiello, Scott and Callander (2013) refer to this as ‘double stigma’, highlighting an amplification of the issue of stigma where it is men who are involved with selling sex. Still lingering negative perceptions of homosexuality, and assumptions of the dynamics of male-male sexual relations, have led to suggestions that men who sell sex assume a more feminine role, digressing from heteronormative expectations of masculinity, and as a consequence, male sex workers become further marginalised (Kumar, 2016).

Research has highlighted how such stigma may be intensely damaging for men engaged in commercial sex, with many found to be reluctant to reveal their activities to those around them through fear of being stigmatised (Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013). A potential

consequence of this marginalisation relates to the access to both peer support networks and formal support, for those who maintain this level of secrecy about their work. Indeed this, along with complexities in the law discussed above, may exasperate the potential vulnerability of male sex workers. Seeking police support has been highlighted as particularly problematic, for men who may fear being further stigmatised because of their perceived 'effeminate' behaviours (Bewley, 2015).

Despite the significance of double stigma, and the potential difficulties with which it is associated, male sex workers have explored means in which they are able to continue their work and minimise its impact. For example, and as this chapter has detailed, the internet as a medium to advertise sexual services remotely has been widely explored by male sex workers. In fact, gay culture more widely has been able to flourish in the online world on sites and apps such as Gaydar and Grindr, where sexual behaviour between men has become much less of a taboo, perhaps related to the shared identity of those utilising the space (Ashford, 2009; Logan, 2017). Such internet innovations also provide a space for male sex workers to advertise their services and find clients without stepping foot onto the street or into a bar (see for example Morris, 2018). What this has led to however, is a male sex work industry which is increasingly visible to clients and researchers, but seemingly further away than ever from the public and legislative eye (McLean, 2013; Bimbi, 2007), with related consequences for potential vulnerability and risk of harm.

2.3.4.2 HIV and Sexual Health

Issues of sexual health are naturally a concern when considering work which involves sexual contact with a client, however, these concerns are seemingly amplified where those transactions involve sexual acts between men (GNSWP, n.d). HIV in particular is presented as a standout concern for male sex workers by the existing knowledge base (Ruiz-Burga, 2021), especially when the global context is considered and areas where HIV is more prevalent than in the UK come under scrutiny (see Salhaney, Biello and Mimiaga, 2021).

Similar to the concerns expressed around the AIDs crisis of the late 1980's (see section 2.1.3, research has focused on how male sex workers are at risk of transmitting HIV both throughout the gay community, and also into the heterosexual community (Ballester-Arnal *et al.*, 2014; Baral *et al.*, 2015; Grandi *et al.*, 2000; Kunawararak *et al.*, 1995; Narayanan *et al.*, 2013; Verhaegh-Haasnoot, Dukers-Muijers and Hoebe, 2015). In a study of the sexual health of male sex workers in England, Mcgrath-Lone *et al.* (2015) found that of the 383 male sex workers tested at GUM clinics, 14 were diagnosed with HIV. The research compared the

diagnosis of male sex workers and other men who attended the clinic, and reported that male sex workers were three times as likely to be diagnosed with HIV than men who did not report being engaged in transactional sex. Importantly, the risk factors for HIV transmission discussed by Smith and Seal (2008) include unprotected anal sex and injecting drug use, and research has suggested that motivational factors in deciding whether to have unprotected sex with a client include awareness about sexual health, the influence of others (friends, family or agency managers) and financial incentives offered for unprotected sex. The greater economic need of street-based sex workers, as discussed within the previous section, may perhaps be linked to an increased likelihood to engage in unprotected anal sex. This, and the links between street-based work and substance misuse also discussed above therefore, may be suggestive of the greater risk of HIV infection for street-based workers when compared to those who work in other settings.

Another determinant of whether a male sex worker engages in unprotected sex with their clients, reported within the literature, is their own personal sexual preference. Minichiello, Scott and Callander (2013) suggest that gay and bisexual men who sell sex report more frequent condom use with their clients than the gay and bisexual population more generally, suggesting a degree of consciousness around the risk of unprotected sex, particularly when considering transactional interactions. There have however, been concerns reported around the willingness of straight male sex workers to engage in unprotected anal sex. Indeed, the same work noted that straight identifying male sex workers are more likely to have unprotected sex with their clients. With straight identifying male sex workers often characterised by notions of survival sex, and citing issues such as drug dependence and homelessness as factors in their decision to sell sex (see for example Atkins, 2015), the weight of a financial incentive for unprotected sex may well outweigh their concerns and predispositions about sexual health. Further work discussing condom use has suggested, however, that male sex workers who exclusively have sex with women are more likely to engage in protected sex (Turek *et al.*, 2021), suggesting that it is the dynamic of the transactional relation and not the sexual orientation of the individual which dictates condom use.

Sexual health is a clear concern for male sex workers, largely due to the nature of their work and the intimate contact with clients which characterises it. Within the literature there are suggestions of there being barriers which may prevent men from accessing the relevant services and support required for issues such as the above. These barriers, and the issue of the availability of support itself, will be considered in the upcoming sections.

2.3.4.3 Position in Policy and Legislation

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there has been a consistent focus on exploitation and victimisation within the contemporary approach to sex work in England and Wales. Both the *Paying the Price* and the resulting Co-ordinated prostitution strategy (Home Office, 2004; Home Office, 2006), focus predominantly on the need to tackle exploitation. Mentions of male sex workers are however, limited, with the focus in both being largely on female sex workers as victims of exploitation. As I have demonstrated earlier in this chapter, there has been some acknowledgement of male sex work within policy. Indeed, the laws which govern commercial sex are purported to be gender neutral, men get a mention (albeit tokenistic) within policy documents such as those above and there is an ever-increasing focus on men in research. What is still evident though, is a lingering reluctance from policy makers to fully account for their existence, instead persisting with the presentation of sex work as a fundamentally gendered issue.

The situation in terms of policy has been described by Whowell (2010:126) as a ‘policy vacuum’, caused by the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and its provision to make all sexual offences gender-neutral, and a policy framework which still focuses for the most part on the experiences of women. Despite this analysis coming a decade ago, it still very much reflects the scenario in present day. The insistent focus on the experiences of women raises questions of just where men as sex workers themselves may fit into any sex work debate. The answer, more often than not, is that they do not fit the narrative, particularly given the stereotypical image of a victim of exploitation and its depiction of the feminine body (GNSWP, 2014). Discussing a Spanish context, Zaro (2021:469) highlights that male sex work is:

‘viewed as an autonomous and foreign world compared to that of female cisgender prostitution. This view permits most of society to remain ignorant about male prostitution while increasing male sex workers’ invisibility and vulnerability.’

Indeed, within an English and Welsh context, it has also been argued that male sex workers position within this debate means that their reality, and therefore their potential vulnerability, is not fully considered or recognised (Whowell, 2010). This is reflected in the policy discussion, and it may be argued that it also extends to the support available for male sex workers nationally, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3.4.4 Availability and suitability of support

With much of the existing sex work research, policy and practice focusing on female sex work, the needs of male sex workers are often overlooked. This is evident in the number of support services tailored to the needs of female sex workers which by far outweigh that of the number of those tailored to men. Bryce *et al.* (2015) report that of the 260 organisations who are members of the NUM scheme, only 19 work with men, and only 5 are designed to cater for the needs of men specifically. With these services, there is evidence of some support available to male sex workers, though the availability of tailored services is particularly sparse when it is considered that the figures presented by Bryce and colleagues cover all of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Without access to the right support services, any needs that male sex workers have may go unaddressed, particularly those which are sex work specific. Earlier in this chapter there were discussions of the issues facing men who sell sex, such as sexual health, their position within policy frameworks and the double stigma which they may face. Part four of this chapter considers the potential vulnerability of male sex workers, and indeed services often provide support and advice around working safely; responding to violence should it occur to gain justice/prevent future violence; and support a sex worker who has been victimised by violence (Smith, 2015).

Research has, however, identified there to be barriers to male sex workers seeking support, with particular emphasis placed on sex work and sexuality related stigma, HIV stigma and concerns related to confidentiality (Brookfield *et al.*, 2020). Support often also relates to quite specific needs, or is strongly aimed towards those with specific identities. For example, Bryce *et al.* suggest that the 19 services working with men 'are primarily LGBTQI+ organisations, general NHS services and drugs or housing support projects' (2015:248). Personal sexual preference has been discussed as an issue throughout this chapter, and it must be acknowledged that not all male sex workers will identify as LGBTQI+ regardless of their transactional sexual behaviour (Berg, 2015), and therefore services framed as LGBTQI+ may be less accessible to those individuals. The same can be said for substance misuse and housing services, whereby issues with substances and homelessness may be a feature of the lives of some, but for many their support needs may present rather differently (Maginn and Ellison, 2014).

Whilst these types of services are may be important, it could be suggested that the current support available to male sex workers falls short of providing the holistic support which is required because of the sparse availability and specialised focus of many of the services.

With the limited research on male sex work, and as a consequence the lacking understanding of the issue, it is clear that there is a need for the development of a greater understanding to help inform future service provision.

2.3.5 Section summary

Male sex workers may well be a minority within any count of those providing sexual services, though the continued gendered approach to any solution to the sex work ‘problem’ is argued to represent one of a number of challenges facing those involved. Indeed, like their female counterparts, male sex workers experience issues of stigma, sexual health and safe working practices, all framed by a legislative model which makes the sale of sex difficult, and perhaps less safe, despite being supposedly intended to combat exploitation. Whilst existing theory related to sex work is somewhat useful in understanding male experiences of these issues, this thinking has often prevented a true consideration of male needs, instead framing their position within policy and practice as being largely that of the purchaser, or those responsible for exploitation.

Indeed, as has been demonstrated within this part of the chapter, male sex workers operate within a policy environment in which they are readily expected to represent the problem and are far less thought of as those requiring assistance themselves. This study challenges this perception, demonstrating both the involvement of men as sex workers themselves, and also their potential vulnerability to experiences of harmful behaviour. The next part of the chapter considers the existing literature’s presentation of men requiring support, tracing social perceptions of masculine and feminine gender roles and considering more closely the issue of violence against sex workers.

2.4 A focus on the concepts of crime, harm, violence and vulnerability

The purpose of this part of the chapter is to discuss what is known about the context within which male sex workers experience criminal and otherwise harmful behaviour. To that end, the discussion within the following sections will trace the intersections between the concepts of crime, harm, violence and vulnerability, informed by the gendered social expectations of men and masculinity. By considering the research evidence both within a sex work environment, and also efforts which have looked at masculine identities more broadly, it is possible to offer a comprehensive analysis of the expectations of men which govern their behaviours and interactions within the context of the above concepts, whilst also giving space to consider the specific impacts of a sex work context.

2.4.1 Crime, harm and violence

The concept of crime itself is, of course, vital to criminological study. However, it is a concept which is seldom defined or discussed in great detail, with it often taken for granted that what is defined as criminal is socially understood and agreed upon and is therefore universally accepted (see Fattah, 1997). Indeed, crime and what is labelled criminal is intended to represent the behaviours and conditions which are deemed to be socially unacceptable. However, individual citizens themselves rarely have the opportunity to influence what is deemed to be criminal directly, with elected representatives in government, and the court system through common law, instead shaping the legislature on behalf of the general public. Importantly, social perceptions of what is right and wrong are therefore represented in proxy, and crime becomes defined by social concerns. This works in theory, however how it functions in practice may be debated, with there being less clear of a social agreement on some elements of the criminal code than others. Indeed, one of the big question marks around the concept of crime is related to whose interests it serves in actuality, and to what end is its grander purpose.

The study of zemiology, that is social harms, offers an important critique of crime. In their introduction to a social harm based perspective, Hillyard and Tombs (2007) outline a focus on behaviours and actions which cause physical, financial/economic, emotional/psychological and cultural harm. Amongst their outlining of what constitutes social harm and their critique of a system of crime which fails to fully address it, the authors raise two particularly poignant points. Firstly, they suggest that crime itself is limited in outlining all of the harm experienced and perpetrated, because only what has been defined as crime is

recognised as such. Secondly, that crime itself is most often focused on behaviours which are less harmful, and therefore falls short of recognising and responding to the most serious harm in society, often perpetrated by states and corporations. What is important with these criticisms, in the context of this study, is that there is recognition that not only does crime fall short of appreciating the full extent of the potential harms experienced by male sex workers, but also that responses to criminal behaviour may instead scrutinise their own relatively unharmed actions whilst not addressing the wider and more significant harms facing them.

A social harms perspective has previously been applied within sex work focused research, with Armstrong's (2021) work serving as the most prominent example. In an application of Pemberton's (2015) human needs focused approach to social harm, Armstrong highlights how neoliberal economic policies often drive participation in sex work, and that repressive sex work policies create harm in their attempts to eliminate the profession. Indeed, the application of a social harm lens is useful in a sex work context because it allows for a consideration of how the state creates the conditions within which sex work exists, through law and policy which aims to reduce participation in the industry and limit its impact on communities. Legislative responses to sex work often give workers a choice between working safely or legally, in what may be considered a deliberate attempt to deter participation in sex work (Phoenix, 2009). Hamby's (2017) definition of violence suggests that the action must be intentional, unwanted, non-essential and harmful to be considered violent, and indeed the deliberateness of these attempts to deter participation in sex work may give rise to suggestions that it is, in itself, state violence. However, as Hillyard and Toombs suggest in their critique of crime, it is far more difficult for the state to be held accountable for something which causes significant harm but is not criminal, than it is for the state to hold an individual to account for something which is illegal but relatively harmless. Armstrong picks up on this point, suggesting that by focusing on social harms as opposed to crime, states may better be held accountable as the 'primary perpetrators of harm towards sex workers' (2021).

Although in this research I focus on interpersonal harmful behaviours perpetrated by individuals, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which the state both perpetrates and facilitates harm. Indeed, I have outlined behaviours within this study which do not fall foul of normative criminal definitions of what may be considered harmful, though may cause harm in themselves, or facilitate further harm. These behaviours exist within a context, in part, created by the policies and legal frameworks outlined by Armstrong, and cannot be properly dealt with through the concept of crime because of the limitations of its scope. For example, I outline behaviour such as time wasting in this work, which does not fall foul of criminal definitions,

though may in itself prove harmful (for a more detailed discussion, see section 6.3). This particular example may well be best resolved with the legitimisation of sex work and stronger employment rights for sex workers, rather than implementing a criminal definition. It does however, serve as an example of both the limits of crime in accounting for all of the harmful experiences outlined by male sex workers, and of the implications of a policy and legislative framework which delegitimises sex work as an occupation.

Whilst, outside of time wasting, I consider the men's experiences of behaviours deemed criminal by law, I have adopted language which recognises how certain experiences may not be readily perceived as criminal by those involved. Verbal abuse, for example, may cause significant emotional or psychological harm yet has historically been less clearly criminally defined than physical or sexual violence, and may therefore not be recognised as something which may be reported (Cook, 2014). Indeed, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, I have been careful with how I ask participants about their reporting behaviour to ensure that they are aware that I am concerned with all of the behaviours listed throughout, regardless of their perceived legal severity.

Despite the limitations of crime as a concept and its inability to account for all of the harmful experiences discussed with the men involved, this work must be framed within the context of crime if it is to develop understandings of reporting behaviours, given the existing structures and their emphasis on criminal behaviours. Although this framing means that I focus predominantly on interpersonal harms, a social harm or zemiological lens remains important in challenging the social structures and actions of the state which in many ways facilitate the interpersonal harms discussed throughout and limit responses to them. The application of this theoretical perspective therefore has two distinct purposes in understanding the barriers to reporting faced by male sex workers. Firstly, a social harm lens can help to identify the role which the state plays in shaping the conditions in which harmful behaviours against male sex workers are perpetrated, which can support a challenge to existing sex work law, policy and practice. Secondly, the critique focused on the limits of crime helps to highlight both how definitions of criminal behaviour do not cover all which is harmful, nor therefore can responses within a crime-based framework sufficiently remedy them. Such a perspective can inform understandings of reporting behaviour by suggesting that the very system to which reporting has traditionally been directed is incapable of fully capturing or responding to the breadth of experiences faced by those involved in this study, and men like them engaged in sex work and transactional sex.

2.4.2 Vulnerability

The concept of vulnerability has been described as nebulous, and the term vulnerable as one often used without proper discussion of its meaning (Brown, 2011). In later work, Brown, Ecclestone and Emmel (2017: 497) suggest that vulnerability as a concept is used:

‘...as an entry point for discussing inequalities or adversities of some kind, with the concept drawn on to anchor consideration of diverse interests and concerns. Prominent amongst these are insecurity, relative economic or social disadvantage, limited coping capacity and unmet need.’

The label of vulnerable, therefore, has been applied in a broad number of circumstances and to a range of different identities thought to require special attention or support. Whilst Enang and colleagues (2019) suggest that vulnerability is a fluid state and may apply to anyone at different points in time, the concept has largely been tied to particular identities and characteristics. For example, certain physical factors have been considered to render an individual inherently vulnerable, such as age or types of disability (Morese *et al.*, 2019). Gender has also been discussed as a factor which influences vulnerability, with Hollander (2001:84) suggesting that:

‘vulnerability to violence is a core component of femininity, but not masculinity. Relatedly, potential dangerousness is associated with masculinity, but not femininity’.

Such a paradox has been presented throughout this chapter, with approaches to sex work perhaps influenced by this wider perception that men present danger themselves rather than being vulnerable to it. Within Hollander’s (2001) discussion, the masculine body is presented as representing a threat because of its size and strength, whereas the feminised body is typically smaller and weaker. Much of this discussion is characterised by physical difference, whereby men have the means to overpower women. Such a perspective is however, based upon the assumption that all men and women possess these particular physical attributes. Notably for this research and its focus on the potential of harm experienced by men, this analysis falls short of acknowledging the potential vulnerability of men whose characteristics do not meet the ascribed masculine standards. What it does offer however, is an important insight into what may represent the wider social perspective of how vulnerability and gender interact, a

perspective which has arguably influenced the consideration afforded to male sex workers in both the research and policy debates.

Indeed, female sex workers have been a clear example of a group determined to be vulnerable, increasingly being labelled as such within policy approaches and policing (Brown and Sanders, 2017). The concept of vulnerability, particularly in relation to the risk of harm, is therefore important to this work as approaches to female sex workers have been influenced by the idea that they face an increased risk of harm related to their working practices and are therefore in need of increased attention and service (Deering *et al.*, 2014; Sanders *et al.*, 2017). These approaches to and understandings of female sex work have not been evident in those related to male sex work (see Whowell, 2010), therefore understanding the influence of the concepts of gender and vulnerability on how male sex workers interact with social systems and structures is of central importance.

A vulnerability framed approach to sex work is not without its critics however, despite being packaged as something which is important to appropriately supporting the needs of primarily street-based, female sex workers. There is a suggestion that the concept is used not only to highlight that an individual may be at risk, ‘but also to imply that they pose a risk to others and should be surveilled or controlled’ (Brown and Sanders, 2017: 430). Under a vulnerability-led approach therefore, sex workers receive not only an increased level of service, but also an increased level of scrutiny, related to vulnerabilities which are facilitated by a state approach to sex work. There are also concerns that normative vulnerability discourses place responsibility on individuals and their circumstances, and do not properly acknowledge the wider structural forces which influence vulnerability (Brown, Ecclestone and Emmel, 2017). Indeed, Scoular and colleagues (2019:214) highlight that vulnerability framed approaches focus on the individual and their situation, and pay ‘little attention...to the intersection of structural inequalities – sex, gender, money, migration, and law – which coalesce to render sex workers vulnerable’. The College of Policing (2019) refer to an individual’s ‘situation or circumstances’ as influencing their vulnerability, which may be seen as particularly unhelpful given the potential of policy and policing approaches in increasing the vulnerability of sex workers by dictating the situations and circumstances under which they must work.

What is evident, regardless of how unhelpful of an approach framed by vulnerability is for female sex workers, is that a gendered understanding of vulnerability rules out the idea of men needing similar support or protection. This sends a message that the support is neither there in the same way nor are men expected to need it, questioning the validity of the harmful experiences of men within this context. Given this, how vulnerability has been conceptualised

in the existing sex work discussions and my focus in this work on violence or otherwise harmful behaviours, I discuss vulnerability throughout as relating to a risk of experiencing harm.

2.4.3 Violence and sex work

Violence has been presented within the existing knowledge base as one of the key issues facing sex workers (see Deering *et al.*, 2014). Armstrong (2019:1292) suggests that ‘sex workers are vulnerable to experiencing violence’, referring to indications that women who sex work are more likely to be murdered than women who do not. Indeed, further work has found there to be high levels of victimisation within sex work populations who, it seems, are disproportionately impacted by such issues (see Connelly, Kamerade and Sanders, 2018; Krusi *et al.*, 2014). For some, violence may even be perceived as inextricable to their commercial sex, with the perception that violence is understood to be an occupational hazard for sex workers described by some participants in Sanders’ (2004) study. It is questionable though, whether violence is an occupational hazard inherent to sex work itself, or whether violence is a by-product of the environment within which sex workers operate. Seib (2007) for example, cites lone or small group working and late night or early morning working as being factors which increase the risk of violence in the workplace. With both conditions reflecting the ways in which sex work may at times manifest, there is some suggestion that it is the stigma associated with sex work, and the regulation of behaviours which raise the risk of violence, rather than violence being inherent to the work itself.

Although, for the most part, violence and experiences of wider harmful behaviours have largely been considered in the context of female sex workers experiencing them, there has been some consideration of the issue in the literature concerned with male sex workers (see for example Legg and Raghavan, 2020). However, considering how scant these accounts are, it is evident that violence is rather a peripheral concern within a research environment which has been primarily concerned with sexuality, sexual health and sex work typologies. Within these available considerations of male experiences of the harmful behaviours of others, there is some evidence of the hierarchical distinctions made between the various venues in which commercial sex is offered, as has been the case in female sex work focused work. Street-based work for example has often been discussed within the context of less favourable working conditions and less structured lifestyles (Ellison and Weitzer, 2017; Davies and Feldman, 1999). When compared to individuals who participate in other forms of sex working, street-based sex workers have been suggested to be more vulnerable to harm (see Armstrong, 2011; Kurtz *et*

al., 2004; Pauw and Brener, 2003), perhaps as a result of the working conditions and lifestyle attributed to this sex work typology. Though these particular efforts focus primarily on the experiences of women who sell sex on the street, Minichiello *et al.* (1999) acknowledge that both men and women who work in a public forum such as on the street present a higher vulnerability to violence than those who work in a more private setting. This has been suggested throughout much of the available literature which considers violence against male sex workers, noting that in terms of the hierarchy of risk, street based male sex workers are at the highest risk of victimisation.

For example, Niccolai and colleagues (2013) compare the risk of victimisation between street based male sex workers and their internet-working counterparts, claiming that a male sex worker who uses the medium of the internet to sell sexual services is less at risk of violence, despite their relative isolation. This is supported by Sanders and colleagues (2018), who found that the online sex workers in their sample reported lower levels of violent crime experiences than studies focused on other sectors of the sex industry. This may in part be explained by the expected professionalism of an internet-based escort, with research highlighting the attention afforded to safety strategies by internet based male sex workers (McLean, 2015). Conversely however, Bar-Johnson and Weiss (2015) find that internet-based male sex workers were more likely to experience violence than their counterparts working out of bars and clubs, despite facing fewer problems with substances and alcohol.

The social setting, or indeed one in which others are present such as the bar and club scene, may be understood as offering a protected space in which male sex workers can operate. A similar support network can be seen within research focused on agency based male sex workers, with Smith, Grov and Seal (2008) finding that the agency based male sex workers in their sample were able to mitigate issues such as that of violence through the support network offered by their agency. Despite indoor sex work appearing safer on the balance of the above discussion, working indoors does not remove the risk of harm entirely, as suggested by Connelly, Kamerāde and Sanders (2018) who report that indoor workers are at a greater risk of robbery because of the availability of money or goods kept in their work premises.

It has been argued that the criminalisation of sex work creates an environment which manifests violence (Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2015), and what is clear from the existing literature, is that regardless of the space scrutinised, experiences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours are issues of consideration for male sex workers. The impact of the policy and legislative framework is clear within the existing knowledge base which suggests the vulnerability caused by sex workers being forced to work in isolation or in unsafe spaces and

removed from the support frameworks offered by peers or colleagues. Vulnerability, whilst not perceived as inherent to the masculine stereotype as may be the case with femininity, is rather influenced by conditions such as the policy framework which negates working practices, or the personal characteristics of the men themselves. Importantly, despite there being an overarching focus on female vulnerability in both the policy and research environments, there is some indication of the potential vulnerability faced by men within the literature. This understanding, however, is limited by the overarching focus on women, and the issue thus requires further exploration in its own right.

2.4.4 A note on LGBTQI+ hate crime

With female experiences of violence within a sex work context being explored in more depth than those of their male counterparts, it is important for me to consider here the broader experiences of LGBTQI+ men given the longstanding associations of male sex work with men who have sex with men. Indeed, whilst male sex work is not an issue exclusive to men who identify with being LGBTQI+, the associations of male sex work and men who have sex with men mean that perceived sexual identity may be a motivating or aggravating factor for the perpetration of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour against male sex workers.

Whilst in the above I have explored violence in a more general sense, I consider here the specific incidence of violence and other harmful behaviours within a hate crime context. The Leicester Hate Crime Project (Chakraborti, Garland and Hardy, 2014:8) define hate crime as referring to ‘acts of violence, hostility and intimidation directed towards people because of their identity or perceived ‘difference’’. Said identities and difference often relate to race, religion, disability, gender and sexuality. Indeed, gay men and men who have sex with men face significant stigma and discrimination related to their sexual identity and behaviours, and related victimisation has been identified as common.

Stonewall, for example, (2017) suggest that 19 per cent of the gay men involved in their survey had experienced hate crime in the year prior, with 87 per cent of that number facing verbal abuse, 11 per cent facing physical violence and 26 per cent facing unwanted sexual conduct. In a more recent report Galop (Hubbard, 2021), found that 64 per cent of respondents had experienced anti-LGBTQI+ violence or abuse, with verbal abuse (92 per cent), online abuse (60 per cent) and harassment (59 per cent) being the most common experiences, and physical (29 per cent) and sexual (17 per cent) violence less common but in keeping with Stonewall’s earlier work which suggested its presence.

The impact of hate crime can be vast, with the harm of the act itself coupled with the idea that the incident is motivated by personal characteristics of the individual who experiences the incident. The act, therefore, is not only an attack upon the individual, but importantly may increase the fear of victimisation faced by others who share characteristics with them as it becomes an attack on a specific identity (Paterson, Brown and Walters, 2019). Incidences of hate perpetrated against gay men and men who have sex with men have been linked, within the literature, to a homophobia based on the challenge presented to hegemonic masculinity by said behaviours and identities (Plummer, 2005). It may be argued, therefore, that offences of this type against male sex workers are motivated partly by the perceived contravention of masculinity posed by the behaviours and identities of those involved. Sex work more generally has also been targeted however, resultant perhaps of the moral stigmatisation of transactional sexual behaviour evidenced within chapters 2.1 and 2.2

Campbell and Sanders (2021:18) suggest that although the recognition of sex workers as a group which may experience hate crime is limited, ‘there is considerable research on sex work which identifies disproportionate levels of targeted hostility and victimisation directed towards sex workers fuelled by prejudice, othering, social marginalisation and the criminalisation of sex work’. A hate crime approach to crimes against sex workers has been adopted within Merseyside police, as discussed in section 2.2.3, in recognition of the specific motivations behind such behaviours (see Campbell, 2014; 2016; Campbell and Sanders, 2021). Whilst not all male sex workers are directly affected by hate crimes, nor are all gay men and men who have sex with men, their incidence serve as a stark reminder of both the stigmatisation of the associated identities and behaviours, and the impact of this stigmatisation on the ways in which sex workers are treated. The continued targeting of men related to their sexual preference and behaviours therefore maintains their othering, and contributes to the social environment in which they live, work and experience the behaviour of others.

2.4.5 Gender role theories, masculinity and the expectations of men

Constructions of what is understood as gender and the development of societal norms in terms of behaviour have contributed to the formation of socially accepted ways of being a man, and of being a woman, whether this be through biology, behaviour, dress or other expressions of self (Cranny-Francis *et al.*, 2003). Essentialist gender theories set out normative gender roles which may be split into the polar categories of masculine and feminine, with human behaviour then understood in terms of where it would fit on the spectrum between these categories

(Paechter, 2006). To be masculine, an individual is expected to be strong, independent and aggressive, much the opposite of what is defined as feminine behaviour with women expected to be dependent, passive and delicate (Brannon, 2011).

Although these two terms make up the polarised ends of the spectrum of gendered behaviours, they are not viewed in equal terms. For example, Kessler and McKenna (1978) suggest that femininity is subordinated in relation to masculinity, to the point that femininity is rather a lack of masculinity than a distinct set of characteristics in its own right. Connell's (1987; 2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity suggests that there is also a dominant way of being a man, which subordinates both women and other men who do not meet this standard. Indeed, the literature has explored ways in which a masculine identity may become subordinated, such as effeminate presentation or sex with other men (Brannon, 2011). It is within Connell's work where distinctions are first made between masculine identities within a hierarchical system of power, with the position of hegemony negotiated within social interactions and between masculine identities.

The ability to protect one's self from harm is amongst the characteristics typically expected of men within essentialist theories of gender, with the masculine ideal portrayed as strong and resolute (Lindsey, 2014). Such a perspective of masculine identity has been suggested to influence the likelihood of men coming forward to report their own victimisation, because of the challenges posed to their own identity as a man (Javaid, 2017). Concerning amongst Javaid's findings in his study focused on police officers and practitioners' perceptions of male rape, was the assertion from a male rape counsellor that 'real' men face less of a risk of being raped by other men. The assertion is perpetuating of the myth that men who demonstrate masculinity are invulnerable and also perhaps provides some insight into why some men may feel uncomfortable in coming forward and reporting their experiences, through fear of not conforming to what is expected within the construction of a 'real' man. The alignment of heteronormative masculine behaviour to 'real' manhood may be particularly impactful to those amongst the male sex work population who engage in sexual behaviour with men, in contradiction to their private sexual preference of female bodies (see for example Kumar and Grov, 2017; Escoffier, 2003). For this particular population, reporting an incident of violence (particularly sexual violence) would mean that they face disclosing their vulnerability within that interaction, and the potential challenge that this poses to their masculinity (Javaid, 2017a), and also their sexual behaviours with other men, which do not conform with expectations of normative behaviour for men. Although these assessments are predominantly focused on the reporting of sexual violence, conclusions may also be drawn

around violence and other harmful behaviour. The way in which the masculine figure is constructed implies a dominant individual who is able to protect themselves from harm (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), and thus avoids the vulnerability which facilitates such experiences. Being a victim of such behaviours therefore brings into question the individuals masculine identity.

This concept of masculine invulnerability has also arguably extended to the way in which sex work is approached in England and Wales, with prostitution almost exclusively portrayed as the exploitation of women by men in policy and legislation (see for example Sagar and Jones, 2014). Male sex work as an issue has been presented as ‘inherently less exploitative than female sex work because interactions between two men make for a certain mutual equality’ (Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013:264). This assumption of equality, described as romanticised by the authors, falls short of acknowledging the variance in masculinities which Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe. In reality, Connell and Messerschmidt highlight that the hegemonic masculine ideal is met only by a minority of men, though it still stands as the norm of male behaviour. When victims of exploitation are portrayed in sex work related discussions, they are almost exclusively portrayed as female. This is arguably because a man does not reflect the stereotypical or ideal profile of a victim of exploitation (Smith, Laing and Pilcher, 2015; Bryce *et al.*, 2015), and does not suit the political or perhaps moral motives of groups which conflate the issues of sex work and exploitation. In fact, and as has been discussed throughout, it is more often assumed that men take other more dominant roles in the sex industry, such as being the purchaser of sex themselves (Smith, 2015), or the conveyor of exploitation (Bryce *et al.*, 2015). This construction of the male role has meant that there has been little in the way of research focused on male sex work in comparison to female sex work, particularly research primarily concerned with their potential vulnerability to harm.

The way in which sex work and gender is framed poses theoretical questions about whether women are exposed to violence and exploitation more frequently, or whether discussions of female victimisation are more forthcoming because they do not upset society’s gender norms in the same way male experiences do. In an assessment of male rape and sexual assault in the U.K, Hammond, Ioannoi and Fewster (2016) highlight that just 15 per cent of reports are made by men. More recent statistics regarding sexual violence highlight that male victims make up 12 per cent of rape offences recorded by the Police and 20 per cent of other sexual offences recorded in the year ending March 2017 (ONS, 2018). Although recorded crime statistics are comprised primarily of female victimisation, male victimisation is commonly suggested to be under-reported so may be vastly under-represented within such

figures. Indeed, for many men, a disclosure of vulnerability and victimisation is seen to be an admission of weakness (Stanko and Hobdell, 1993), and it is apparent that men, influenced by the pressure of societal expectations and their own internalisation of the attributes of the masculine being, may be less likely to appreciate and project their own vulnerability, which may in turn raise barriers to their accessing of the required support.

2.4.5 Men as victims of sexual violence

Whilst within this study I intend to encompass a wider range of harmful behaviours and not limit my scope to physical and sexual violence, an exploration of male experiences of sexual violence is particularly poignant given the way in which they are represented in policy and practice surrounding sex work. Indeed, there is scarce consideration of adult male experiences of sexual violence within the existing knowledge base (see for example Spruin and Riley, 2018). As has been highlighted within this chapter, the male body does not conform to what is expected of the stereotypical victim of such behaviour. Embedded within the above discussed expectations of manhood and masculinity, is the societal perpetuation of male rape myths which are reflected in understandings which place men as invulnerable to sexual violence.

Turchik and Edwards (2012:211-212) summarise the literature on male rape myths, highlighting amongst other beliefs that ‘men cannot be raped’, ‘*real* men can defend themselves against rape’, ‘sexual assault by someone of the same sex causes homosexuality’ and ‘if a victim physically responds to an assault he must have wanted it’. The acceptance of such attitudes may prove problematic in terms of the way in which male rape is approached by society, and how it is dealt with by the Police, healthcare and support services. Indeed, as noted of Javaid’s (2017) work, male rape myths can be perpetuated even by those who work to counsel male victims of sexual violence. Such a response by those expected to be most sensitive to the needs of a victim may contribute to deterring a victim from pursuing any action related to their experience, as may their own physiological response to the assault. Arousal or ejaculation during a sexual assault is common amongst male victims and may be misconstrued as signifying enjoyment or consent to the act (Bullock and Beckson, 2011; Fuchs, 2004). The view that arousal signifies consent has also had implications in terms of attaining justice for male victims of sexual assault, with Fuchs going on to highlight how courts in the US have often concluded that arousal and other physical reactions to sexual assault have been enough to prove consent. Though Fuchs’ work is relatively dated and set in the context of the US legal system rather than England and Wales, it is a seminal text amongst the scant literature available

on male victims of sexual assault and offers an important insight into the complexity of physiological responses and their interpretation. If an individual's physiological response to a sexual assault is interpreted as a signal of consent, whether legally or socially, it is likely to cause some difficulty where reporting or seeking support is concerned.

The reluctance to appreciate the potential vulnerability of men, and the portrayal of male victims as somehow not maintaining the standards of the 'real' man, are clear within the existing literature concerning male victims of sexual violence and also in the way in which sex work is portrayed at a policy level. Although the focus of this section was limited to experiences of sexual victimisation, it may be argued that similar attitudes exist in relation to male vulnerability to harm more generally, therefore barriers to reporting may be a concern across the more diverse set of experiences considered by this study.

It is clear from the existing literature that, not only are violence and otherwise harmful behaviours a concern for male sex workers, but also the attitudes towards the invulnerability of men and the rape myths which spawn from these lead to difficulties in men seeking support for their experiences. These male specific issues are coupled with perceptions of sex work and the construction of how sex workers experience violence in further convoluting the problem. Whilst there is a degree of knowledge existing around these issues which create barriers for men seeking support, many of the links are tenuously applied to the specific context of men who engage in transactional sex, and there is yet to be a study focused upon male experiences and subsequent reactions to harmful behaviour specifically within this context. There is, therefore, a gap in the literature concerning the intersection of the male and sex work identities and behaviours, which influence the help-seeking and reporting of men engaged in transactional sex.

2.5 Deficits in understanding

Male sex workers exist within a context informed by a historically present expectation of male and female gender roles. From societies which conditionally tolerated sexual relationships between men which adhered to power thresholds, to the outright condemnation of sexual interactions which were not procreative and within the bounds of matrimony, men selling sex to other men has been something with which society has never fully come to terms. This chapter has demonstrated that whilst there is a growing body of evidence which considers the experiences of men who sell sex, men remain a secondary consideration to female sex workers and their needs.

Despite these developments in knowledge however, men and male sex work are left underrepresented in terms of research, policy and within the legal framework in England and Wales (Connelly, Jarvis-King and Ahearne, 2015). In addition to their absence from much of the dominant discourse related to sex work, where male sex workers are considered themselves within the literature, the focus tends to be on issues of sexual orientation and preference, sexual behaviours such as who is the ‘top’ and who is the ‘bottom’, and sexual health, with a particular emphasis on the risk of HIV/AIDS (See for example Ballestar-Arnal *et al.*, 2014; Baral *et al.*, 2015; Browne and Minichiello, 1997; Smith and Seal, 2008; Smith and Seal, 2008a). The way in which male sex work has been approached has been influenced by historical and societal perceptions of not only commercial sex but also sexual relationships between men. The current approach taken to male sex work research may be problematic in a number of ways; for example, questions may be raised about whether the interest shown in the sexual orientation of male sex workers stems from an interest in taking care of their wellbeing or rather from the morally charged responses to homosexuality and a curiosity for ‘queer’ and ‘deviant’ behaviour which steps outside of the perceived ‘norm’ of heteronormativity (Berg, 2015).

An issue rarely considered in research focused on male sex work is the potential vulnerability of the men involved, and their experiences of violent or harmful behaviour, as demonstrated within the latter parts of this chapter. Paradoxically, the way in which female sex work is approached in England and Wales is often focused on the potential vulnerability of the women involved (see for example Brown and Sanders, 2017; Sanders, 2016; Kinnell, 2008), a potential vulnerability which has not been extended to understandings of male sex work. Upon reviewing the literature base, questions are raised as to whether male sex workers experiences of violence differ from their female counterparts, and whether or not their perceived invulnerability in much policy and practice has been justifiable. This poses theoretical issues, as much of the existing research has approached sex work through a feminist lens, in a debate which fundamentally limits the discussion to being between the exploitation and the empowerment of female bodies. A nuanced feminist perspective can however support a consideration for other groups impacted by structural inequalities and marginalisation, and indeed male sex workers may themselves be considered at a disadvantage with regards to the stigma that they face, the policy frameworks governing their activities and their general safety related to this. Importantly, if the general understanding of male sex work is framed in a way which ignores their potential vulnerability, then the existing systems cannot fully support men who experience the harmful behaviours outlined in section 1.1.2. As such, the gap which this study is intended to address relates to incidences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours

which are perpetrated against male sex workers, highlighting how men experience these behaviours and understanding how they react in terms of seeking help for them. This is done with a view to developing knowledge as to how reporting can be better facilitated, and justice can more easily be attained by male sex workers.

I developed the following research questions, aim and objectives, as outlined in the introduction, based on the gaps in the literature demonstrated throughout this chapter:

Research aim: To understand and explore the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or otherwise harmful behaviours.

Question 1: How, if at all, is violence or otherwise harmful behaviour experienced by male sex workers?

Question 1 related objectives:

- a. To investigate the occurrence and experience of harmful behaviour against men who exchange sex for money, or other incentives.
- b. To generate insight into the ways in which men negotiate the risk of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour during the course of their sex work.

Question 2: What understandings can be drawn from male sex workers reporting behaviours, related to their experiences of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours?

Question 2 related objectives:

- c. To explore and analyse the factors which influence the decision-making process when a male sex worker is considering reporting an incident of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour against them.
- d. To identify ways in which the reporting of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour can be facilitated.

Question 3: How does existing theory seek to explain male experiences within a sex work context and where are these understandings limited?

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter, made up of four parts, has contextualised the study within the current knowledge base by considering: the implications of the historical approaches to male sex work and male sexuality more broadly, the current debates surrounding sex work and their impact on male sex workers, the existing knowledge base related to male sex work and the inter-relationships between masculinity, vulnerability and violence. This includes partly addressing the third research question which asks how existing theory seeks to explain male experiences within a sex work context, highlighting the limitations of the existing understandings of sex work in appreciating the realities of male sex workers.

These limits, and further gaps in knowledge, are outlined in the section above, which highlights the lack of consideration of male sex workers as a group who are potentially vulnerable to violence and otherwise harmful behaviours within the existing research efforts focused on them as a population.

In the next chapter I outline the methodology of the study, present the phased approach to the data collection, and discuss the theories of knowledge and reality which have guided my approach. The chapter also includes a discussion of the sampling framework and provides information on the participants who took part. The methodological discussion concludes with my own reflections on the research process, including a discussion of my own identity and how this has influenced my experiences of researching in this area.

3 Methodology

In a topic area shrouded by moralistic judgements and polarised standpoints, the methodology of a sex work-related study must be designed in a way which, as far as possible, avoids bias and provides a platform for sex workers to present their own reality (Zheng, 2013). Much criticism is justifiably drawn on existing sex work literature and policy decisions which rely upon anecdotal evidence to make generalisations about sex work communities, particularly when those communities have not had the proper opportunity to voice their opinions or share their concerns (see for example Weitzer, 2010). Views and arguments which are formed from an outsider perspective and centred upon issues within the sex work community may also be criticised if they lack real input from those who have themselves lived the reality of the issues being studied (O'Neill, 2010). Indeed, the real value of arguments formed in such a way are questionable, and it is fervently suggested that sex work research should be performed with the community in question at the heart of the design (Wahab, 2003; Bowen and O'Doherty, 2014).

As this chapter will demonstrate, this thesis involved a four phased data collection process which combined a quantitative survey with 10 male sex workers, with semi-structured interviews with 7 male sex workers, 7 sex work practitioners and 2 police officers. Within, I argue that by centring the methodological approach and co-constructing materials with male sex workers and those who have worked directly with them, it has been possible to identify the most poignant issues related to their work and their experiences. Of course, a topic such as sex work incites opinion and debate, and although I have taken every precaution to avoid bias in the study, my principles and beliefs must be taken into consideration. This chapter will address just how my own principles and identity impacted this study, not only in terms of my pre-dispositions about sex work, but also regarding theoretical understandings of knowledge and reality.

3.1 Theoretical understandings of reality and knowledge

Theories of reality and knowledge shape and guide a study, and approaches to how we understand both are disputed and challenged by opposing schools of thought (Goldman, 2011). An element of the understanding of reality and knowledge comes from the reflexive discussion of the individual researcher (or research team) and their own positionality, and the potential impact of this on their understanding and interpretation of the work and in turn, the work itself. I begin this section with a discussion of the existing theories of what there is to be known and therefore what constitutes reality, before reviewing suggestions as to how we can *know* and

what constitutes *knowledge*. Importantly, I outline my own positionality and its impact on my approach to this study before concluding with a summary of the theoretical understandings of knowledge and reality which have guided my approach to this study.

3.1.1 Reality

The ontology of a study deals with the way in which reality is believed to be formed, that is, what exactly there is out there to be known about a subject (Punch, 2014). Discussions of ontology are often between objectivism, the idea that reality exists externally to those observing it, and subjectivism, the idea that reality is constructed by those observing it (Blaikie, 2010). The way in which a researcher understands the formation of reality often dictates the approach taken to their work, and as such it is important that they are clear on their own understanding and that this is discussed.

As described by Gray (2017), an objectivist ontology views reality as existing independently of thought, and suggests that reality can be understood objectively through the use of scientific reasoning. A study following this mantra should include minimal subjective thought and interpretation by the researcher, as what is deemed reality is set and there to be captured and known (Aliyu *et al.*, 2014). Contrastingly, subjectivist thought places reality in the mind of the beholder and suggests that knowledge is dependent on the interpretation of the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). This approach to the formation of knowledge is more open to the subjective input of the researcher (O'Donoghue, 2007). Greener (2011) describes these two different ways of understanding knowledge as 'flat' and 'deep' ontologies, in that an objective or flat view of reality knows what there is to know about an issue and a subjectivist or deep view of reality acknowledges that it is relative and can be dependent on multiple factors.

The majority of previous sex work research has leant towards a subjectivist approach, with much of the theoretical understanding of sex work issues placing sex work as a construction of society and its values. For example, radical feminist theorists place sex work as being constructed by the patriarchal nature of society (Pateman, 1999; Bindel, 2017). Similarly, queer theorists place sex work as a construct of the norms and values held by society and seek to challenge the presumption of heteronormativity in sex work, arguing that the reality of sex work depends on what is being studied (Berg, 2015). While radical feminist thought places sex work as an issue of male exploitation of female bodies, a queer theory lens would more likely suggest that sex work is far more diverse and such an explanation of sex work issues is far too narrow. What can be noted from focusing on these particular theoretical

explanations of sex work, is that the reality of sex work is different depending on both the narrative being presented, and how those presenting sex work have interpreted said narrative.

3.1.2 Knowing

The epistemology of a study relates to how it is believed knowledge should be generated, and what can be regarded as the correct way of ‘knowing’ about a subject (Bryman, 2014). The debate of ‘knowing’ is often centralised around the argument about whether or not the social sciences are inherently different from the natural sciences. In essence, the question is around whether knowledge is theorised or observed.

Often referred to as a scientific approach, a positivist epistemology separates the research and the researcher, and insists that knowledge that can be observed is of a higher standing than knowledge which is theorised (Moses and Knutsen, 2012). The role of a researcher in this is to collect data and interpret objectively, and often researchers in this school of thought are interested in quantifiable information which can prove or disprove a hypothesis. Important to note about a positivist epistemology is the belief that there is a single and objective reality, which is out there to be discovered by a researcher (Punch, 2014). As such, the researchers’ role in interpreting the data is considered to be minimal. Such an approach, and seeking to ‘hypothesise’, is not often seen in sex work related research with studies more often aimed at building and developing an understanding. To hypothesise on sex work would suggest that there is a single objective reality, which is inevitably problematic given the variance in reality and experience between most sex workers (see for example Davies and Feldman, 1999; Sanders, O’Neill and Pitcher, 2009; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). What may be problematic with the way in which knowledge in this area is structured, however, is the tendency for policy makers to seek solutions based on larger scale studies and statistics, with information communicated in a more concise and visual manner often considered more ‘scientific’ and favoured over the lengthier narrative accounts developed by traditionally interpretive research (Hammersley, 2013; Silverman, 2011).

Indeed, interpretivism as an approach to knowing is a markedly different approach to positivism. This school of thought, which criticises the use of positivism in social science research, suggests that knowledge is relative, as reality is constructed by those who experience it (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). With an interpretive, or constructionist, outlook of how knowledge is formed, Schwandt suggests that ‘we do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct or make it’ (2000:197). Therefore, knowledge like reality, is relative and dependent on time and space, and is formed in a process of dialogue between the researcher

and participant, a process deemed co-construction (Charmaz, 2009). Marvasti (2004), asserts that the subjective views of both the participant and researcher must be acknowledged whilst constructing knowledge, and uses the example of studying prostitution to suggest that one's own standpoint on an issue should not be suppressed, but rather integrated into the way in which reality is understood, and knowledge is formed. Appreciative of the complexity of sex work, interpretive methodologies and ways of 'knowing' are most common within the field, though this is at times as part of the wider use of feminist standpoint theory (see for example Armstong, 2011; Pitcher, 2014; Campbell, 2016; O'Neill, 2001).

One of the focuses of a feminist standpoint epistemology is the attribution of importance to research that gives a voice to the marginalised, and the theory places knowledge as being socially situated with those with experience of an issue (Doucet and Mauthner, 2007; Naples and Gurr, 2013). While an extremely valid approach to research focused on male sex work, because of the relative marginalisation of the men involved, my adopting of a fully a critical feminist standpoint approach may have been problematic. When discussing a critical feminist standpoint Harding (1987:184) suggests that 'women's experiences, informed by feminist theory, provide a potential grounding for more complete and less distorted knowledge claims than do men's.' In essence, this perspective suggests that a researcher focused on the issues faced by a marginalised community must somehow have faced similar marginalisation themselves in order to fully understand their experiences. Whilst I accept that research of this nature, where those usually marginalised are given a voice and are held up as the experts of their own reality, is the most appropriate approach, I question whether my own relative non-marginalisation has impacted this work at the level suggested by Harding (1987). Importantly, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, I have placed a premium on lived experience and set my own role throughout the process to be facilitative.

3.1.3 Identities, barriers and self-reflection

Given the field of research in which this study is situated, my identity may be considered to be a break from tradition in terms of those who study sex work. Introducing their book on ethical research with sex workers, Dewey (2013:4) provides an example of how certain characteristics are expected of sex work researchers when they discuss ethical challenges and their potential to leave a researcher open to 'criticism of her (or his) moral principles or standards'. Although there is consideration for the male researcher of sex work in this statement, this consideration is secondary to the female sex work researcher. Indeed, sex work research is a field dominated by the female researcher, and at times male participation has been considered 'suspect' and

‘voyeuristic’ (Hubbard, 1999:230). Concerns are also raised about cross-gender research relations, and the potential for power differentials between the researcher and participant that this creates (Hanks, 2019; Sallee and Harris, 2011). Although I am male, performing research with male participants, gender as an issue was still a consideration going into the interview phase. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) suggest that hegemonic masculinities underpin all interactions between men, so questions may be raised as to how the male-male interaction may have influenced the dynamic of the interview process. Oliffe and Mróz (2005:258) in their discussion of interviewing men about health and illness, suggest that men who are interviewed by men ‘assess and gauge the interviewers’ orientations and opinions, and they develop their responses within a gendered context.’ The sensitive nature of this research may have meant that some of the men interviewed would have been unlikely to truly open up to another male, though it may have been possible to negotiate this with an openness and honesty about my own predispositions on the issue of sex work.

First studying the topic of sex work in an undergraduate module at Swansea University, taught by now supervisor Mrs Deborah Jones and Professor Tracey Sagar, I quickly became interested in, and concerned by, the lack of knowledge, consideration and rights afforded to male sex workers in both research and policy frameworks. Importantly in this module, there was an emphasis on safety and rights which I have adopted in my understanding of sex work. The interest I developed in this module led to an idea for my MSc dissertation, focused on theoretical explanations of sex work and their influence on policy and legislation in England and Wales. It was in this dissertation that I argued that men as sex workers were not truly considered in their own right, but were often included in statements made about female sex workers, and this was largely to do with the dominant discourses on sex work originating from somewhere along the spectrum of feminist thought (Dawson, unpublished). From here, I decided to pursue this line of research further, only this time my focus was to be more closely related to the safety and rights of men who engage in sex work.

As demonstrated in chapter 2, in the dominant sex work discourse, discussions usually fall somewhere along the spectrum between rights respecting notions of safety, and moralistic notions of unwavering vulnerability and exploitation (Connelly, Jarvis-King and Ahearne, 2015). Whilst I accept that there are incidents of exploitation in the sex industry, and that preventing this should be high on the list of priorities for decision makers, I argue here and throughout that the lived realities of sex workers are diverse and complicated (see for example Sanders and Laing, 2017) and that any approach to sex work should appreciate the agency and autonomy of those involved. My understanding going into this work is that sex workers are not

inherently vulnerable and subject to exploitation, but operate within a socio-political context which may facilitate violence and otherwise harmful behaviours, and thus compromise their safety. The men who comprise the focus of this study have the potential to be vulnerable, as do men of all walks of life. However, the label of inherently vulnerable is both stigmatising and value-laden and is not facilitative in the acknowledgment of the rights and agency of men who are involved with selling sexual services.

However open and honest I was about the way in which I perceive sex work, there is no doubt that I was to be perceived as an ‘outsider’ by participants for a number of reasons. Firstly, I have never participated in sex work at any level, nor have I worked for an organisation who deal directly with sex workers. I have no experience of sexual relationships with men, and I have never dealt with the issues of homelessness, substance misuse or criminality. As a PhD researcher, I may also be perceived as relatively privileged. Being an ‘outsider’ in these ways may have influenced interactions with sex working participants of a range of backgrounds, although Dewey and Heineman (2013) suggest that even a researcher with sex working experience may be perceived as an outsider, because of their relative privilege whilst undertaking a research role. ‘Outsider’ research on disadvantaged groups has been criticised on the basis that an individual who has not lived the reality of the group they are studying cannot articulate their views and experiences in a way which an ‘insider’ might (Bridges, 2002).

Indeed, Morris (2018) suggests that certain aspects of queer culture did not need explaining within their interviews, owing to the shared understanding between the two parties of sexual minority status, but may have done with a straight researcher. Questions may however be raised around whether this shared understanding can be assumed, even within an ‘insider’ relationship, with individual experience and perspective often divergent. In a further discussion around shared identity, detailing a research relationship between a straight researcher and gay participant, Sparkes (1994) suggests that his status as an ‘outsider’ may have contributed to the understanding, as being interviewed by somebody of a comparable background may have meant that shared experience and values were taken for granted, and therefore not discussed in the research context. As an ‘outsider’ researcher, my relative naivety to the lived experiences of male sex workers could have helped ensure that the work did not fall short in developing understanding, and addressed even the most basic questions which may have been mutually understood and unspoken in an ‘insider’ relationship. Although it may appear that the sex work community are suspicious of ‘outsider’ research, it may be more accurate to suggest that this is a warranted reaction to ‘outsider’ research which has not properly represented the voices of

sex workers (Jeffreys, 2009). The position of the ethical sex work researcher is rather that of ‘the wise’ who Goffman (1963:28) describes as:

‘persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of courtesy membership in the clan. Wise persons are the marginal men before whom the individual with a fault need, feel no shame nor exert self-control, knowing that in spite of his failing he will be seen as an ordinary other.’

(Goffman, 1963:28)

Although I do not share certain characteristics with the research participants, I have made my understanding and appreciation of the complexities of sex work clear. The transparency of the research process, and the involvement of sex worker voices throughout has been important for building a sense of legitimacy for the research and trust between any potential participants and me. Despite being able to demonstrate a degree of understanding of the lives of the men involved in this study, I also maintain a level of distance as an ‘outsider’, which ensures that the pursuit of their reality is not presumptive.

3.1.4 Reality, knowing and this study

The primary aim of this research is to develop an understanding of the reporting behaviours of male sex workers who experience violence or otherwise harmful behaviours, and as such it was important that my approach was open to understanding the varying reality of all of those who participate in the study. As part of the data collection, I sought views from male sex workers, practitioners and the Police, and the reality of the issue presented is no doubt dependent on who has been asked, whether that is extra-category or inter-category. Reality then, is not situated within a fixed context, but is dependent on time, space and the individual. What constitutes reality, and is out there to be known, is therefore subjective. The epistemological position, or way of knowing, that has informed my research leans towards elements of an interpretive feminist standpoint framework, in that I agree that marginalised groups should be a priority in research, and that the most useful knowledge is situated within the narrative of said marginalised groups. As discussed above, I reject however, that an ‘outsider’ to this group cannot contribute to the formation of this knowledge, therefore I adopt an interpretive and facilitative role in the knowledge formation process.

Although sex worker voices have been prioritised throughout, I have also sought the voices of those with experience of working to support sex workers in various ways, such as practitioners and the police. My doing so does not detract from the importance of the reality of sex workers themselves, but rather is intended to facilitate a more rounded analysis of reporting behaviours and the measures taken to encourage them. Whilst the feminist principles outlined above perhaps do not fit this area of data collection as neatly as it does with the men themselves, my emphasis on the importance of lived experience in knowledge and reality remains.

3.2 Research strategy

This section focuses on the approaches taken to the capturing and understanding of data within the wider contexts of criminological and sociological research, as well as within a specific sex work context and this study in particular. In this section I address questions as to how a methodological framework can be developed in a way which is accessible to stigmatised and hidden communities such as male sex workers (see Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2015), and can develop an understanding of an issue and potentially action changes in the way it is approached.

In terms of understanding the reporting behaviours of male sex workers and actioning social change, it may not have been enough for me to have simply pursued descriptive knowledge. Experience is often individual, and it is emphasised in the existing sex work literature that the reality of sex work is not one-dimensional (Weitzer, 2009). It was important that my approach to knowledge and understanding in this study reflected the difference which is often visible in sex work experiences, therefore this section demonstrates how the use of a quantitative element to support and inform a qualitative study helped provide a balanced approach to meeting the aim and objectives of this study.

3.2.1 Exploring quantitative methods

A quantitative approach to research involves the use of questioning and investigation which ultimately results in the development of quantifiable data, that can be presented in the form of statistics, charts and graphs (Bryman, 2014). In order to achieve quantifiable data, the approach generally adopts closed ended questions, with a limited selection of responses available to the participant. This method of testing allows a researcher to investigate attitudes and beliefs predominantly, and can be useful in uncovering how many participants in the sample agree or disagree with certain statements and ideas (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Notable of a quantitative

research strategy is its primary concern for the answer to questions of what, who or when, rather than the more detailed and explanatory why or how. Typically, this approach involves an aim of proving or disproving a hypothesis, such as in Logan's (2010:693) study, where the hypothesis was that 'male escorts serve a market that includes a substantial number of heterosexually-identified men'.

The ability to objectively prove or disprove a hypothesis is considered by some to be an advantage of quantitative enquiry (Creswell, 2014). The quantification of data in relation to a hypothesis is considered to be the 'scientific' way in which knowledge is formed, because of the researchers 'detachment' from the data and their limited role in interpreting the data based upon their own understanding (Firestone, 1987). In this, it is suggested that a quantitative approach to research is advantageous in pursuing the single objective truth of an issue, a truth which is independent from the interpretation of the researcher themselves (Castellan, 2010). The supposed lack of ambiguity in quantitative enquiry may make it appealing to policy and decision makers, who seek definitive and digestible evidence on which their decisions are to be made and justified (Mays, Pope and Popay, 2005; Jerrim and de Vries, 2015).

Although quantitative researchers may hold their approach up as the more objective, it may be questioned whether research, and a researcher, can remain truly objective (Crotty, 2003). It has been argued that theoretical standpoints and values underpin all research interactions, and that the questions and approaches taken by a researcher are developed and influenced within this context (Marsh and Furlong, 2002). As well as questions surrounding the approaches true objectivity, a quantitative approach is also perhaps limited by its inability to go beyond attitudes and beliefs, with exploration of what influences such traits being minimal (Queiros, Faria and Almeida, 2017). Quantitative inquiry reduces the sample to numbers and percentages, narratives are lost, and it is perhaps these narratives that are most relatable and attention grabbing to the reader (Allen and Preiss, 1997). Within this study, an emphasis on quantitative methods alone would have meant losing the narratives of the men, practitioners and police involved which provide a glimpse of social reality from their perspective and in their own words.

3.2.2 Exploring qualitative methods

Denzin and Lincoln (2011:3) describe qualitative enquiry as a researcher 'attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them'. In this approach, the researcher is far closer to the data collection and analysis processes, as Denzin and Lincoln suggest the researcher is tasked with making sense or interpreting the reality

presented by the participants. In terms of the approach to data collection, a more detailed and in-depth response is sought from participants, and rather than testing attitudes, the questioning is geared towards understanding the interpretations and meanings of human behaviours (Castellan, 2010). In order to do so, qualitative inquiry is concerned with explanations of the what, why and how, with a general focus on questions which are answered by narratives rather than numbers (Ormston *et al.*, 2014).

Of the extant sex work literature, much focus is ascribed to qualitative enquiry and detailed accounts of experiences within the sex industry (Gerassi, Edmond and Nichols, 2017). Popular within the field, is the use of interviews of varying kind (see for example Leary and Minichiello, 2007; Smith *et al.*, 2015; Whowell, 2010) and researchers embedding themselves in the field as part of ethnographic studies (see for example Sanders, 2005a; Atkins and Laing, 2012; Ashford, 2009a). Previous research has suggested that a qualitative approach to research is important in delving further into an issue rather than skimming the surface with general attitudes and beliefs, and its value is held in the rich quality of data which is developed from such an approach (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). Emphasis is placed on enabling the participants to present their reality in the way which they experience it, meaning that a researcher may not get confirmation of a pre-thought-out hypothesis but rather an experience of discovery and exploration, and perhaps enlightenment (Atieno, 2009). Important here is the acknowledgement that experience is key, and that the most important knowledge is situated with those with a relevant lived reality. Within this study I am concerned with exploring the reality of those with relevant experience, as this chapter will go on to discuss in more detail.

3.2.3 Combining quantitative and qualitative methods

Whilst the above discussions have demonstrated the merits of quantitative and qualitative approaches, both strands of inquiry to have their limitations. For example, qualitative inquiry has been characterised by smaller sample sizes, meaning there is some difficulty in generalising findings and providing a true account of the scale of an issue. Indeed, qualitative analysis of an issue is typically based upon the narratives of a small sub-section of the community in focus (Marvasti, 2004), and is not necessarily intended to make generalisations of the community in focus. Firestone (1987) differentiates quantitative research from qualitative research and asks whether it is the cause of an issue being investigated, or an understanding which is being developed. Indeed, Jacques (2014:317-318) highlights that ‘quantitative research is best for theory testing, whereas qualitative research is most useful for theory development’.

In the case of this research, I have aimed to develop an understanding of the experiences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviour amongst the men involved, and also of their reporting behaviours. Here, I am interested in both the cause of the issue of non-reporting and developing an understanding of the men's harmful experiences. With a view to informing policy and practice as well as providing narrative accounts, the quantitative element of the research and the quantification of discussions within the qualitative element has allowed for a consideration of the scale of the issue of violence and otherwise harmful behaviour amongst the sample. Allen and Preiss (1997) highlight that quantifiable evidence has been argued to be more persuasive than qualitative, and this chapter has documented the value placed in quantitative research by policy makers, though they present a counter-narrative that it is the strength of the two combined which can make the most convincing evidence.

Indeed, a quantitative methodology is scarcely used in isolation in sex work related research (Gerassi, Edmond and Nichols, 2017), as is also true for the wider social sciences (Williams *et al.*, 2016). The clandestine nature of sex work means that there is some difficulty in achieving a representative sample, and sex work studies are often more exploratory in nature, seeking to better understand participant reality rather than test existing thought *per se*. Indeed, my intention with the study at hand has been to develop understanding and explore the issue in detail, rather than test an existing hypothesis and make generalisations about all male sex workers. However, there are elements of quantitative enquiry which I believe to have added to the research. Logan (2010) describes quantitative data about sex work as complementary to the qualitative understanding already held and perhaps this is where its true value lies in terms of its use in sex work research. For example, I include descriptive statistics which provide useful accounts of involvement in sex work, experiences of violence and the reporting behaviour of those who do experience violence or otherwise harmful behaviours.

The qualitative element to the study provides the main platform from which I am able to explore the reasoning behind these initial statistics, as the more open ended and exploratory questioning allowed for an opportunity for the participants to explain their answers in greater detail. A similar approach has been noted in many studies, in particular the work of Smith *et al.* (2015), where qualitative interviews were utilised alongside quantitative surveys. What this approach afforded me was the opportunity to contextualise the data and identify common themes in the participants understanding of their sex working. Qualitative data can also be presented in a way which is impactful, and perhaps even more so than I have suggested for quantitative data above. For example, the Student Sex Work Project (Sagar *et al.*, 2015) utilised a particularly creative and impactful method of dissemination in the form of short film which

recounted the discussion of the qualitative interviews. This particular film was subject of a BBC Three mini-series and was disseminated to a broad audience outside of the academic world. *Beyond the Gaze* (Sanders *et al.*, 2018) also utilised a mixed methods approach, with YouTube clips being developed from the qualitative data and disseminated to wider audiences through this medium.

Importantly, the qualitative element of these studies offered an emotional and personal element which is lacking in the numerical data. Focusing again on the Student Sex Work Project report, and the use of mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, it was apparent that the open-ended questioning of the qualitative interviews allowed the authors to explore issues in more depth to fully identify and explore the drivers behind certain trends and issues. For example, the Student Sex Work Project (Sagar *et al.*, 2015) identified that 36 per cent of the sample saw the fear of violence as a negative aspect of sex working. The qualitative interviews then revealed the ways in which the participants negotiated their safety, and particular concerns that they had in relation to protecting themselves. This demonstrates a mixed-methods approach identifying an issue, and then also offering an explanation as to why it is an issue and what is being done at ground level to alleviate the problems that it may cause.

In relation to the aim and objectives of this study, it was not enough for me to simply identify the issue of non-reporting, but the study required the development of an understanding of the reasons which mitigate whether or not men do report violence. Therefore, I adopted a quantitative element which informed the later qualitative discussion. Whilst I have described the above studies as being mixed methods, and indeed this study does combine a quantitative and qualitative element, the sample size for the quantitative element perhaps prevents the study from being considered as truly mixed-methods. Therefore, the study can be considered as primarily qualitative, informed and underpinned by an initial quantitative element which explored experiences of harmful behaviour and attitudes towards reporting.

3.2.4 Co-creating research materials

Participatory action research (PAR) focuses on making positive social change through the use of inclusionary methods, which equate the role of the researcher and those being researched (O'Neill, 2010). Emphasis is placed on the community in question to highlight the real issues which affect them, in an attempt to develop research with and for the participants – rather than producing research on them (Van Der Meulen, 2011). The method raises questions on where

exactly real expertise lies, and challenges researchers to descend from their metaphorical ivory towers to create real social change at the ground level.

The use of PAR is encouraged in sex work research circles, and particularly within the Sex Work Research Hub (SWRH), of which I am a member. The SWRH connects academics globally to share work and ideas around the subject of sex work, with a particular focus on advocacy, collaboration and ethically sound research which contributes positively to the sex work community. Participatory action methods have been utilised in previous sex work studies by hub members to great effect, most notably in the Student Sex Work Project (Sagar *et al.*, 2015) and Beyond the Gaze (Sanders *et al.*, 2018). The use of PAR in both studies extended to the involvement of sex workers in the delivery of the study itself.

Whilst I have not included peer researchers within this work and therefore cannot claim it to be grounded within PAR, I have sought to implement principles similar to those which underpin a PAR methodology, to ensure that the emphasis has been on male sex workers and their own lived realities throughout. My co-construction of research instruments with the voice of male sex workers and those with experience of working with them, meant that the material guiding the research was informed by lived experience.

During a placement undertaken in April 2018, I spent a working week with two sex work support organisations where I was able to interact with staff to understand the service offering, interact with clients to help develop the research and also observe interactions to support my understanding of appropriate language and approaches to working with sex workers. Whilst with these organisations, I was able to discuss the initial online survey for phase 1 with two male sex workers and numerous members of staff. My doing so was informed by my belief that the input of these men, and organisations who had worked closely with male sex workers and had dealt with the reporting of violence, would help ensure that the most important questions were identified and included within the survey, and that in turn this research was focused on the most pertinent issues facing male sex workers. Also, with my identity and ‘outsider’ status, this approach afforded validity to the work in the sense that the questioning was grounded within real world discussions, rather than from the extant literature alone. It was this element which I then used to inform the later data collection methods, as the survey informed the direction taken in the interview process as discussed in the next section.

This element of co-creation developed into a pilot study, with those possessing relevant experience feeding back on the content of the survey and its functionality early on in the process and also when a first draft of the survey had been completed. Involved in the pilot study was one male sex worker and three practitioners with extensive experience of working

with male sex workers. I also extended this to ask two academics, one sex work focused and one more broadly criminologically focused. Whilst the findings of the pilot survey and the reassurance that the software used functioned as expected were important, the true value in this phase of the research was the feedback offered around the use of certain terminology. One such example was from the participant with sex working experience, who suggested that my use of the word 'online' as a venue of sex working needed to be expanded as 'at the booking phase it will be different'. This led to me breaking down this initial question into two, which asked the venue of the initial arrangement and then a separate question which asked where the service would take place. A full breakdown of the pilot study is available in appendix B, where I outline each of the comments received and the subsequent changes made.

In keeping with my will to support real social change with this research, I intend to feed back its findings to participants, support services and the police. This will be done through the development of separate briefing documents, which will be published through Twitter, sent to support services to share with attendees and staff and shared with police forces in England and Wales through the College of Policing. In order to suit the needs of the audience in each circumstance, three briefings will be produced though each will contain information of the other two and links to where they can be found to maintain transparency and ensure that the men involved can access any potential solutions proposed to services and the police.

3.3 Data collection methods

Sex industry related research often broaches sensitive subjects, and the approach which the researcher takes is not only important in ensuring the collection of good quality and meaningful data, but also the wellbeing of the research participants who agree to take part in the study (Shaver, 2005). The combination of discussions related to sex work and the experience of harmful behaviours within this study adds a layer of complexity, and the approach that I have taken has required me to demonstrate a level of sensitivity to ensure the participants were protected and that the data gained from their input was of good quality (see Fraga, 2016). Indeed, discussions of violence generally raise issues both ethically, and methodologically. Jamel (2009) focused their research on the issue of male rape, and discussed the importance of consulting experienced practitioners about their data collection tools to ensure that questioning was sensitive, and approached the most important topics. As discussed in the previous section, I took a similar approach in this study, as I acknowledged that the knowledge and experience

of practitioners would help guide the research in a way which is both ethical and informative, and would be based on a level of experience that I myself do not possess.

As well as the input of practitioners, I also took a phased approach to data collection. Within this approach, each of the different data collection methods were informed by the preceding phase(s) or the development phase. This meant that at every turn, the data collection methods were grounded within the experiences of male sex workers, or those who had experience in working closely with them. With my relative inexperience, coupled with my acknowledgment that knowledge is best placed with those with an experience of the reality being sought, I deemed this the most appropriate way to formulating the data collection methods. Each of these 4 phases will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

3.3.1 Phase 1 – Online survey with male sex working participants

Various studies point to the increasing use of the internet by sex workers (see for example Mclean, 2013; Logan, 2010; Sanders *et al.*, 2018), and it could be argued that male sex workers in particular are making use of the internet, with discussions of street based male sex work limited to larger cities such as Manchester, London, Newcastle and Cardiff (Whowell, 2010; Male Action Project, 2013; Ellison and Weitzer, 2017; Davies and Feldman, 1999). The relative lack of male street-based sex work may indeed mean that male sex workers as a population are hidden and difficult to reach, a challenge which I had to negotiate in the development of the data collection methods. Indeed, men who transact sex may not be visible in the same way in which female street sex work and massage parlours have traditionally been; however they do have a particular online presence, as has been demonstrated in previous studies (see for example Sagar *et al.*, 2014; Import.io, 2014; Sanders *et al.*, 2018). For this reason, I deemed it appropriate that the initial communication of this research was to take place utilising an online format.

Phase 1 of the data collection then, was a survey which I designed using the software Qualtrics, and distributed online via my purpose-made professional twitter account, and through advertising in various sex work related service delivery projects throughout England and Wales. A similar method of distribution was utilised by the Beyond the Gaze study (Sanders *et al.*, 2018), which distributed questionnaires online through various channels including Twitter, and received a total of 652 responses nationally. The use of Twitter in this research to distribute the survey had the scope and potential to reach male sex workers nationally, therefore aiding the study in providing a wide snapshot of male sex industry involvement across the country. It could potentially be argued that using an online survey

limited the study, indeed Evans and Mathur (2006) discuss the potential limitation of how internet users often have shared attributes, and are not representative of a full population. Although this argument was made 13 years ago, and internet access has become much wider since, it still may be valid of some within the male sex work population. There was, therefore, a chance that many male sex workers may have been excluded from the study should it only have been advertised through these online channels. This may be particularly applicable to those who lead more un-structured lifestyles, and face issues such as substance misuse and problematic housing arrangements.

In order to ensure that the opportunity to participate was extended to those facing these particular issues, I distributed the survey to male sex work services to be passed onto their clients, and although I could not offer a paper-based form of the survey a potential participant could still have made use of internet facilities in a library or somewhere similar, if they were to wish to take part. I acknowledge that this method may still not have captured the voices of those who do not use Twitter nor are engaged with services, however with a population hidden such as are male sex workers, finding an appropriate data collection and sampling framework which captured the whole population was idealistic and unachievable given my time and resource restraints.

I developed the initial survey and as part of the pilot study and received significant feedback from both a current and retired male sex worker (see appendix B), and also from representatives of organisations who work with sex workers. The survey featured mostly quantitative questioning about involvements in, attitudes towards and experiences of, the sex industry. There was a particular focus on experiences of harmful behaviours, using categories informed by NUM, which include:

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Verbal abuse
- Threatening behaviour
- Stalking/harassment
- Blackmail
- Robbery
- Removal of a condom without consent
- Attempted removal of a condom without consent

- Stalking/harassment
- Time wasting

The purpose of the quantitative questioning within the initial survey was to support the identification and development of themes and concepts which could be explored in more detail in phases 2 and 3 of the study. I have also utilised this data to help contextualise the findings of this work, though I never had the intention of producing statistical significance with this phase of the work.

3.3.2 Phase 2 – Interviews with male sex working participants

At the end of the phase 1 survey, I included a data capture form for participants to leave their details if they would like to be contacted to discuss the issue any further, and I included information about the phase 2 interview. Within this, I described the interview as a follow up to the survey, with the results from phase 1 informing what was to be discussed.

My intention with phase 2 was to open up the discussion of the experiences of male sex workers and their own lived reality, understanding how they perceived harmful behaviour committed against them, and the avenues through which they could report it. Previous sex work research informed by feminist theory has tended to adopt a semi-structured approach to interviewing, in order to provide participants with the chance to construct their own narrative about their reality (Punch, 2014). Punch highlights feminist use of semi-structured interviews because not only do they align with how feminist theorists believe knowledge is best formed, but because traditional interviewing methods lack the sufficient sensitivity. The argument from a feminist perspective, was that traditional methods such as quantitative surveys and structured interviews were masculine forms of research which did not allow women (or the disadvantaged) to present their reality on their own terms, but rather on terms set by the researcher (Doucet and Mauthner, 2012). Campbell (2016) argues that her semi-structured interview approach was particularly important when sensitivity was required, as rather than requiring the participant to adhere to a strict script she allowed them the opportunity to speak openly about issues such as sexual violence in a natural and conversational manner. Given the nature of this study, this is of significant importance.

Whilst I took a survey approach in phase 1 of this research, my intention was not to develop knowledge on my own terms, but rather to set out a formal attempt at informing the more discussive phases to follow. I designed the second phase, in line with the previous work and theoretical positioning outlines above, as a semi-structured interview in which the

conversation guide (see appendix D) and questioning was informed by general themes and specific findings of phase 1. A semi-structured interview approach is praised for its flexibility, and potential to open up discussion on a topic rather than limit the discussion to a script pre-set by the researcher (Edwards and Holland, 2013). The open and flexible approach to the discussion enabled and facilitated a more participant led discussion, in which I was able to use the aforementioned themes emergent from the initial survey to guide the conversation.

In order to complete phase 2 semi-structured interviews, I offered participants a variety of means of ‘meeting’ me. These were primarily through face to face contact, via the medium of video call (such as Skype), over voice call, through email or through instant messaging (IM). Importantly, this list was not exhaustive, and should a participant have wanted to complete the interview through a method not listed above, then I would have made accommodations to do so. The reasons why I adopted this flexible framework of delivery are two-fold. Firstly, doing so helped me offer a significant degree of choice to the participants in terms of how they engaged with me. This helped continue the efforts of performing this research on the terms of the participants themselves. As a consequence of this approach and its flexibility, there is a chance that more people became involved because they could do so in a way which suits their needs and concerns.

There are, of course, issues which should be considered related to performing research interactions such as these over the internet. Whilst discussing the use of internet-enabled interviewing, Sullivan (2012) argues that although this type of meeting perhaps lacks some of the authenticity of a real-life face to face interview, it affords the opportunity to those who cannot meet for geographical reasons, or those who may prefer not to meet in public, to take part in the study. Given the time commitment of an interview, and with protecting the identity of the sex working participant in mind, this approach allowed those reluctant to meet in a public place the opportunity to ‘meet’ remotely. Importantly, despite our communications being remote in this scenario, there was space within the communications to meet and talk around the interview. This was important in my building of an element of trust and rapport with participants, facilitating participant disclosure and thus ensuring the quality of the data gained (Weller, 2015).

There were elements of a traditional interview missing from those based online and without video-call technology, however. For example, using IM meant that I could not observe the body language of the participant. Indeed, IM interviewing has been discussed in the literature as a method of interviewing which allows a synchronous conversation between the interviewer and participant, but adds an extra layer of protection to the participants identity as

they do not visually reveal themselves to the interviewer (Pearce, Tjorgersen-Ntoumani and Duda, 2013). Although losing the element of body language did present a challenge in recognising any visual cues given by the participant, this extra level of protection afforded by the method may have reassured the participant that their participation in the interview posed no threat to their sex working status being outed. The method may also have helped manage any perceived power relationship, as there is a space created between the two facilitated by the technology which negates the immediacy of any perceived judgement (Stacey and Vincent, 2011). Appendix V includes a paper that I have authored based on my experience of utilising IM interviews, and discusses the above in more detail.

I utilised the same interview guide, developed from the phase 1 survey, in both the in person and technology facilitated interviews. Whilst the guide does list questions, I did not limit myself to these. Instead, the questions should read as a list of key areas emergent from the initial survey which every interview should cover, though there was room to manoeuvre should the participant wish to discuss issues I had not originally identified. The use of a guide in semi-structured interviewing, as discussed by Fylan (2005), facilitates a free-flowing conversation open to the participants input that both recognises the importance of allowing the participant to present their own reality and ensures that the topics identified pre-interview are covered.

There were only slight procedural differences in terms of the way in which I provided information about the study and recorded informed consent. For in-person interviews, I emailed the appropriate documents prior to the meeting (if an email address was provided by the participant) and also in printed format upon meeting. I recorded informed consent in paper-based format, using a form provided to the participant along with the information sheet, I also continually confirmed informed consent verbally throughout the interview. For internet and telephone-based interviews I also sent the information and informed consent forms via email to participants prior to the interview commencing, and recorded consent in written form via email or via spoken word. I again continually reaffirmed consent verbally throughout the interviews.

3.3.3 Phase 3 – Interviews with practitioners

In Phase 3 of the data collection, my focus turned towards practitioners who had experience in working with male sex workers. I approached support services throughout England and Wales and informed them about the research and its aims, before sending an invite to interview (see section 3.4 for more information about the sampling framework). I utilised Interviews with

practitioners in order to provide a slight shift in perspective from the male sex workers themselves, allowing for more discussion of observed behaviour rather than the more personal narrative of phase 2. The interviews also provided me with a 'view from the inside' as to how violence and otherwise harmful behaviours are approached by services, and the services role in supporting onwards reporting.

Again, the interview schedule that I created for this phase was informed by the findings of phases 1 and 2. For practitioner participants however, I adapted the questions towards their experience working with male sex workers, and their perceptions of harmful behaviour and reporting based on this experience. As discussed in the previous section, a semi-structured approach to interviewing can importantly provide flexibility in the discussion between researcher and participant. The nature of having a guide in place ensures that all relevant topics are covered and allows the researcher to adopt a consistent approach to the interviews, but also affords room to discuss details which may not have been on the agenda to begin with as discussion is not limited to the questions posed by the researcher (Bailey, 2018; Given, 2008). Such flexibility between interviews was important, as pertinent questions may have been raised by practitioner perspectives, which did not arise from the discussion with sex working participants or were not considered going into the study.

I performed interviews with practitioner clients in person or over the telephone. The in person interviews varied in location between the offices of the service with which they were attached, or in public spaces such as coffee shops. Again, I put emphasis on convenience and comfort for the participant in selecting the venues in which interviews would take place, and I left it open to them to decide where they would like to meet. The venue of an interview is significant for a number of factors, including confidentiality and the comfort of the participant in opening up to the researcher (Gagnon, Jacob and McCabe, 2014). Bolderstan (2012) for example, discusses the importance of a private and quiet space to conduct an interview. A private space limits the opportunity for the sensitive subject matter being overheard by others, though a space which is too isolated may present risks which are negotiated in a more public space. For example, a coffee shop as an alternative to the office provides an indoor space, with enough background noise to mask conversations and provide an element of privacy within a public setting, and was useful if support projects did not have the facilities to host the interview, or participants wished to seek another space. The disadvantage of using such a space is that it is very much public, and even though quieter and more private areas of a coffee shop may be identified, this is not to say that other customers would not occupy the immediate surrounding area and there may be issues with transcribing data because of the associated noise (Bullock,

2016). Given the nature of the discussion, it is also possible that participants were less comfortable discussing certain aspects of sex work should they feel they would be overheard. One such example is included within the reflections on the research process located in section 3.8 of this chapter, and is considered to be a limitation of this approach.

3.3.4 Phase 4 – Interviews with Police Officers

Phase 4 of data collection saw my attention shift to the Police and their approach to working to protect male sex workers. Again, I used the narrative from the earlier three phases in an informative capacity in developing a further semi-structured interview schedule which focused on Police experience of working with male sex workers, and the general operational and strategic policing approaches to sex work related matters.

Whilst the emphasis in sex work research is often on understanding the reality of those within the industry, it is not a new approach to seek the perspective of the Police, particularly when it is the policing of issues surrounding sex work such as safety which comes under scrutiny (see for example Sanders *et al.*, 2018; Cooper, Cook and Bilby, 2018; Campbell, 2016). I did not seek the views of the Police to undermine those of the sex working participants, but rather to examine the relationship from both sides to ensure the applicability of the findings within the context of police work, ensuring that the findings are fit for purpose in terms of supporting the police in improving their response and reporting rates for male sex workers experiences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours.

Researching the police does present ethical and methodological challenges in itself, namely surrounding issues of trust and power which underpin the interactions between researcher and participant, as is true of any research interaction (Ryan and Dundon, 2008). A key element of this relationship between participant and researcher is reflected in the identity of the researcher themselves. Brown (1996) discusses three typologies of policing researcher, the inside-insider, the outside-insider and the outside-outsider. The inside-insider is characterised as a police officer who researches policing related issues, the outside-insider as an ex-officer who researches policing matters and an outside-outsider is described as having no official link to the Police and reflect a separate entity. Reiner and Newburn (2008) discuss these categories of policing researcher, and suggest that although outside-outsiders may have more difficulty in gaining access to their sample than the other two categories they are not alone in facing issues of trust. Indeed Belur (2014) discusses how her status as a former officer meant that she held the power in the interviews and some participants found it particularly difficult to open up to her.

This raises questions about just how poignant my status as an outsider was, once initial access was secured. Reiner and Newburn (2008) continue their discussion and suggest that in their experience the Police spoke openly of their views and experiences, even to an outsider researcher, once the initial relationship had been built. However, Punch's (1989) research with the police as an outsider was seemingly more problematic, as he found access to individual officers and a subsequent open discussion to be more difficult to attain, particularly when the focus of the research was on deviance and bad practice. What must be noted about Punch's study, is that its focus meant that discussions touched upon cases where evidence was planted, and statements were forged. Given the confession of such actions, of which the officers involved were liable to face repercussions, their reluctance to talk openly may be quite understandable.

Sex workers are often critical of the police and policing more generally, therefore the relationship between them is complex, and researching with both provides complexities. Within this study I have not placed emphasis on police wrongdoing, but within the findings I do highlight areas where the police could improve the way in which the issue of male sex work is approached. Reiner and Newburn (2008) discuss the importance of trust between the researcher and participant when it is the Police's work which is coming under scrutiny in research, and care was taken in the development of the data collection methods to ensure that this trust could be built. In order to build this trust, I avoided rigid questioning and favoured instead an approach which encouraged a natural conversation and the development of rapport. My use of a semi-structured interview guide for this phase of the research was important in enabling the Police participants to present their experiences of working with male sex workers on much their own terms, but in a way where I could ensure that the most important themes and questions were covered in the limited time available for the interview (Jamshed, 2014).

3.3.5 Limitations of the data collection methods

I made the decision to distribute the initial phase 1 survey online because through this method of delivery, there was the potential to include participants all throughout England and Wales, in a way which was time and cost effective. Many male sex workers are internet enabled (Ashford, 2009), so I felt that an online method of communication was also favourable in ensuring that a good size sample was reached. As highlighted earlier however, limiting the survey to online respondents may have meant the exclusion of those with no access to the internet. This may be particularly applicable to those of whom face issues with housing or live more unstructured lifestyles.

In an effort to ensure the accessibility of the study, I also distributed the survey to male sex work services to pass onto their clients, sending a flyer advertising the study which included details on how to participate (see appendix S). Still however, the method was not suitable for those who do not engage with said services or those who simply could not access the survey. Whilst I acknowledge that this does provide a limitation to this work, I deemed alternative approaches to administering the survey unrealistic. In fact, the potential for internet-based survey methods to replace 'traditional' paper-based methods has long been discussed, with the ease of distribution highlighted as a particular strength (Lefever, Dal and Matthíasdóttir, 2006). Attempting a more 'traditional' method, such as a postal or face to face survey may have proven problematic. For example, a postal survey would require the addresses of the potential participants, which for good reason I would not have access to, as this is the kind of information sex workers would actively protect. I also doubt that it would have been appropriate to approach men who I believed to be male sex workers in person, whilst they were looking for business or 'walking the beat' as described by Atkins and Laing (2012: 632), given my outsider status and lack of previous contact with individuals who may frequent the area. The way in which I approached this element of the study, although limiting in some respects, I had deemed the most appropriate given the target sample.

For the second phase of the research, I did not have to consider the problem of limited internet access in quite the same way, as the participants would have already accessed the initial online questionnaire (and would therefore have access to the internet) or would have arranged to meet in person. However, a potential issue with this method that I identified was the lack of a personal touch found with the interviews over the telephone or web chat. Important in my approach to this study, was the comfort and body language of the participant, and although these remote interviews do offer some cues outside of the spoken word, it is a lot more difficult to interpret their meaning than in a face to face setting (Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2015). To interview every participant in person would have been ideal, but with the constraints on time and budget, and the preference of some participants to meet digitally rather than in person, therefore I saw internet-facilitated interviews as the next best alternative where suitable.

All interviews were of a semi-structured nature, and while this is advantageous in exploring issues which may not have been thought about prior to the interviews, it does also make it more difficult to maintain a standard approach between each interview (Edwards and Holland, 2013). This may be considered a limitation in terms of this studies replicability. However, consistent with my theoretical approach to how reality is determined and best understood, I consider reality to be relative to who was asked, and my emphasis was on the

participant to present the issue, as much as possible, in their own terms. In order to ensure that the interviews did not deviate too far from the topic of interest, I created an interview schedule which was consistent for each phase of the research, meaning at the very least each interview covered the same topic areas.

3.4 Sampling framework

In its simplest form, a sampling framework may be considered as an instrument through which participants are found and accessed. However, it is important to acknowledge that the purpose of a sampling framework is geared more so towards accessing knowledge and those who know (Noy, 2008). Rather than a single objective reality, within this research I focus on the lived experiences of men who engage in the sex industry, and those who work to support and protect them, as is reflected in the way in which I have constructed the sampling framework. The phased approach which I have adopted in this study meant that a variety of approaches to sampling were necessary to ensure that gaining the views and realities of each subset of participants were achieved, and the objectives of the research were met. The following section will discuss the sample methods in relation to who I sought to contact and why, and how this was achieved.

3.4.1 Phase 1 sampling framework

I administered phase 1 of the study, a short survey about experiences of sex work and attitudes towards reporting violence, online and targeted participants who have experience in selling or transacting sexual services. Through the methodological framework of this research, I have highlighted the importance of constructing reality and knowledge with those who have lived and experienced it. With that in mind, I constructed the sampling framework of this phase of the research aiming to contact men, over the age of 18, who self-identified as having sold or transacted sex.

The age criterion of this study was perhaps the most important of all considerations which I had to make. I did not enforce any upper limit on participants for the study, however, considering the legal framework for prostitution, and the fact that in order to consent to selling sex an individual must be at least 18, I strictly enforced a lower limit of 18. In legal terms, an individual younger than 18 would not be considered a male sex worker, but rather as a victim of child sexual exploitation. Allowing an individual who was under 18 to participate in the

study would create both ethical and legal issues in terms of safeguarding and research integrity, therefore I implemented a policy in order to avoid this (see section 3.7.3).

The second criterion of participation for this study was the importance of allowing participants to self-identify in having transacted sex, rather than my asking them whether or not they had ‘sex worked’ or ‘sold sex’. Many of those who would fit the definition of having transacted sex and therefore be eligible for my study may not in fact have self-identified as a sex worker *per se*, but may recognise that their sexual behaviour had in some way been transactional – this led to the wording used in question 7 of the phase 1 survey.

The third inclusion criteria was that the participants had to identify their gender as being male. Questions may justifiably be asked as to why male specific identities are considered here, and trans identities are not. I acknowledge that the safety and working conditions of trans sex workers are massively important issues, though this study has been shaped from the outset by my own belief that male sex work has too often been grouped with female sex work in research and policy decisions, although its differences are yet to be fully understood. Trans sex work itself raises a unique set of issues, and admittedly deserves more than the scarce research attention which has been afforded to it up until this point. In designing this research I felt however, that trans issues should not be grouped with male sex work as a secondary consideration or afterthought, and conclusions made based on this little attention afforded to what is a complex issue. Questions have been asked about this approach of myself and other male sex work focused researchers, around the exclusion of trans voices, though I have not personally heard the same questions asked about female sex work research which considers neither male nor trans identities. I feel it important to reiterate here that this within this study I have operated on the basis that gender itself is formed by repetitive behaviours and performances (Butler, 1990) and therefore have not suggested anywhere in this research that participants should be assigned male at birth, and therefore I have not actively excluded trans voices in this way. The threshold for ‘maleness’ was instead reliant on the individuals own identification of their identity. I acknowledge however, that based on such an approach, I can neither make conclusions based on trans identities nor guarantee trans participation in this work.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, I distributed the phase 1 survey online and through support services. In the case of the online distribution, I used Twitter as a platform to promote the survey. I acknowledge that there may be issues with having advertised the study through this platform, as it cannot be assumed that all male sex workers could have accessed the survey through these means. However, Twitter did offer a platform where the research could be

advertised for free and communications through this medium had the potential to reach a large cross section of the sex work twitter community. For example, one retweet from NUM would potentially reach their 11,200 followers (correct as of 21/08/20); some of these followers may then also have retweeted my study, sharing it with their following. In fact, many services utilise Twitter as a platform of sharing news with their clients, and some of which follow my account already, meaning my study was easily shared with them.

This method of sampling included elements of a snowball approach, which has commonly been utilised in research with harder to reach and hidden populations (Johnson, 2014). Snowball sampling in essence, involves identifying a target sample group who are then involved in the recruitment of further participants, through recommendation of the research to their peers and social networks (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). Given the target sample of phase 1, and the potential difficulty in reaching them, I considered it to be advantageous to approach sampling in such a way. Indeed, Noy (2008) highlights the potential of the snowball approach to sampling in accessing a hidden or potentially vulnerable group, suggesting that a researcher is able to gain the trust of participants, because of the recommendation of the research by somebody with shared values and experiences. The advantage for this phase, is that the survey reached potential participants through the endorsement or recommendation of somebody who may be considered as an 'insider' to their community, whether this be another sex worker or support service. This point holds significance to this study, with me being an 'outsider' researcher attempting to gain views from within the sex work community, it is important that participants knew that the study was valid and worth their time.

Consistent with the way in which I have approached reality and knowledge in this study, a snowball method of sampling gave a degree of control to the participants in highlighting where knowledge is best found (Noy, 2008). Using twitter as a platform meant that participants could share with their whole networks if they see fit, or with individuals who they felt may have been most likely to share their experiences. In this study, a recommendation of the research was as simple as a retweet. This also meant that it did not need to be a participant who helped snowball the research; instead this could have been anybody who had access to twitter and was, whether through my original tweet or another accounts retweet, made aware of the study. An account retweeting my study put my study on their profile, and on the timeline of those who follow them, and while a retweet cannot be taken as an endorsement in all cases, what would be immediately apparent is that a retweeter was keen for their following to view my tweet, which may add an element of trust in itself. A series of three 'tweets' sent from my professional account advertising this phase of the research was seen a combined 72,000 times

by those who follow me, and those who follow accounts who had ‘retweeted’ these initial tweets.

A potential limitation of me relinquishing control of who was approached to take part in the study and instead using elements of snowball sample, may have been that it was not possible or at least less likely that I would achieve a representative sample and therefore be able to generalise the results to a wider population (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). However, I do not seek to make generalisations with this study. Indeed, I have suggested throughout that experience and reality are relative, and therefore varying between participants. Although this may be considered a limitation to this element of the sampling framework to some, my belief is that the strengths of the snowball method in researching potentially hidden and vulnerable groups far outweigh this and thus the method was adopted.

To describe the sampling framework in phase 1 as a snowball approach alone falls short of the full reality of the approach, as the research is shared and referred to the participants both directly and indirectly, rather than the details of potential participants being passed on to me. The sampling framework also included elements of a self-selecting approach, as participants were exposed to the study in some way (through twitter messages or service provision) and saw their experiences as relevant to the study, and therefore chose to take part. A self-selecting sample is based upon the idea that a participant is not approached, but is rather made aware of a call for participants in some format and decides to take part (Lavrakas, 2008). A self-selecting methodology is common in online survey research, and it is argued that the lack of researcher presence, and subsequent reduction of researcher effect on the respondent can be considered a strength of the method (Couper, 2005). This may have been particularly useful given the hidden and potentially vulnerable nature of the male sex work community and given the sensitive nature of the subject matter discussed in the survey. What was important about the self-selecting element of this sampling framework, is that no label was applied to the participants. No approach was made to those who may potentially be sex working, rather participants could have identified or not identified with certain behaviours deemed transactional, and it was left to them to decide if their experiences were relevant. With this strength however, is a potential limitation of a self-selecting approach to this element of the research. By leaving the ultimate decision about whether an individual’s experiences are relevant to the study to them, it may open up the possibility for the sample to have been skewed towards those who do identify in such a way and feel as though they have a point to make. Bryman (2014) discusses sampling bias and highlights it as an issue when some of those who make up a certain community have less of a chance to participate in the study. Whilst this may

be true of those who cannot access the internet (as discussed below), it may also be true of those who would not identify their behaviours as transactional sex, even if it were. In an attempt to combat this bias, I provided descriptions of what may constitute transactional sex in the survey and avoided terms such as 'sex work' where possible.

The issue within this online self-selective snowball approach taken in this phase is the potential to have perhaps created a biased sample, made up of just those who have access to the internet and have chosen to take part in the study. I have earlier outlined that in order to ensure that those who do not have access to the internet were not left out of the study, I contacted support service providers and asked them to ensure that their clients were aware of the study, and that if possible, clients could be enabled to participate in the study if they wished to. In order to do this, I included a flyer (see appendix S), which detailed information about the study and how to participate for services to share with service users. I then requested of these services that should a client show interest, that their participation would be facilitated with the necessary equipment to complete the survey. I offered no incentives to the support services, apart from a promise that they would receive an operational summary of the key findings of the research, to maximise the impact of the research at a service level. Although this may have gone some way in ensuring that the chance to participate was afforded to a more diverse group than only those who are internet enabled, I could not be sure that those who are not internet enabled could be fully represented and thus the sample may still be biased in this sense. Although this is a limitation of the study, the value of what has been found cannot be undermined as what is offered is an illumination of the lived experience of the male sex workers involved in this study, and their experiences and attitudes towards reporting harmful behaviours.

3.4.2 Phase 2 sampling framework

Phase 2 of the data collection took the form of a follow up interview informed by the phase 1 survey, seeking to open up the discussion around the lived experiences and reporting behaviours of the male sex workers involved in the initial survey and others with lived experience of sex working. The participant criteria for this phase remained the same as phase 1, and I contacted potential participants either through their participation in the initial survey, through the use of a second social media campaign, and also whilst spending some time with a sex work support service who had kindly accommodated me. Those recruited through phase 1 had already disclosed their transaction of sex, confirmed that they were over 18 and

confirmed their identity as male, and I asked participants participating directly in the interview phase to confirm all of these criteria before the interview began.

For those contacted through their initial involvement in phase 1, I included a message at the end of the survey which invited them to be involved with a follow up interview, and explained details of the interview, such as how they may be contacted and how their contact details would be stored separately from any other survey data. Although the original sample was developed through a self-selective snowballing approach, my selection of participants for this interview phase was more purposeful. Purposive sampling is often described as selecting those who are most helpful to the aims of the research (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). A purposive sampling framework is focused on finding and communicating with those who are most knowledgeable and experienced on the subject matter being researched (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). Given my understanding of reality as being situated as those who live it, a predominantly purposive approach to this phase supported those with direct experience of sex working to expand on discussions of their lived reality within the follow up phase.

Although suited to identify those closest to the reality of the issue, the selection bias of the researcher in purposive sampling may be called into question, and issues may be raised around the selection of the most appropriate individuals to take part in the study (Battaglia, 2011). Although not impossible, there may also be questions raised about the generalisability of the sample, with the non-randomised nature rendering a generalisable result more difficult to attain (Gobo, 2004). However, it was not within the scope of my aims within this study to necessarily apply labels or generalisations to the male sex work community, rather the study is about understanding the lived experiences of men who sell sex, and how these experiences apply to their reporting of harmful behaviours. I developed the purposive sampling framework with the idea that the men involved in the survey were best placed to discuss the issue further, particularly if they met the criteria discussed at the beginning of this section. Further still, the phase 2 participants contacted through phase 1 had volunteered or at least shown an interest in discussing further by leaving their contact details at the end of the survey. So, participants had some involvement with transacting sex (whether that be past or reoccurring behaviour), and also shown a wish to discuss the issue further. At this phase, the method of sampling became almost a self-selected sample within which I could then purposefully contact those who could contribute to the interview. Participants therefore possessed the relevant characteristics to incur in depth discussion about issues relating to the aim of the study.

Despite this methods strength in achieving a relevant and knowledgeable sample, it may have had a potential limitation in that the scope was limited to only those who had

participated in the phase 1 survey had I not included a second social media campaign or spent time with a service. Therefore, some cross-sections of men who engage in transactional sex may have been outside of the scope of the research. As discussed previously this may be particularly applicable to those who live less structured lifestyles and as such, I extended the sampling framework to be more inclusive. By creating a second social media campaign, using elements of a snowball approach similar to phase 1 as discussed above, I had hoped to reach male sex workers through Twitter that perhaps had not engaged with phase 1 or had not seen the previous Twitter campaign. I also contacted a number of the men involved in the study through their involvement with a sex work support service. In sex work research, gatekeepers can often be vitally important in helping researchers gain access to a sample (see Sanders, 2006), and indeed I owe a debt of gratitude for the service supporting my research and allowing me to base myself within their offices and attend their sessions. In my engagements with the men using the service, I was able to build rapport and discuss my work further with them, and those who were interested in taking part were invited to take part in the interview. Again, the participants were selected purposively, given their known involvement in sex work and their experiences being relevant to my work. Whilst the views of these men are vital to this research, I must acknowledge that their perspectives are largely reflective of the given context within their locale and cannot be representative of a national picture. However again, as discussed earlier, it is not my intention within this work to generalise the experiences of all men who transact sex, but to provide an insight into the lives and experiences of some of those men who are involved in the work, and have been largely left out of debates around their activities.

3.4.3 Phase 3 sampling framework

I completed phase 3 of the research, a semi-structured qualitative interview informed by phases 1 and 2, with practitioner participants. In order to access participants who had experience in working with male sex workers in some capacity, I made contact with male focused projects identified in a review of services, a number of mixed gender sex work services and various support services with expertise outside of sex work. In order to approach participants, I sent emails to each of these projects to provide information about the study and request the participation of their staff members. The criteria for participants held that they must have worked directly with male sex workers, in the context of service or support delivery. I chose these parameters as the aim of this phase was to develop an understanding of the experiences of male sex workers and their reporting of harmful behaviours, from those who incidents are often disclosed to, and who are often involved in the reporting process.

My approach to sampling in this phase again drew upon purposive elements, in that I strategically approached services whose staff were experienced in working with sex workers. The majority of organisations that I approached worked specifically with male sex workers, however there were a number of services who also worked with female sex workers, and some which were not sex work specific but had dealt with clients who had disclosed their sex work whilst working with the service with support in other aspects of their lives. The advantage of a purposive approach in this phase, was that I only approached services where there was a guarantee (or likelihood in some cases) that the staff had the relevant experience and knowledge to support the research and its aims. Importantly, by not limiting the study to services working exclusively with male sex workers, I could draw comparisons at interview between male and female sex workers, and the subsequent responses to them in policy and practice. This is particularly important given the findings of the literature review which suggest a heavy focus on female needs within service provision.

3.4.4 Phase 4 sampling framework

In order to support the narratives from the previous 3 phases, the final phase of the data collection comprised of interviews with members of the police in England and Wales. In line with time and budget constraints, I decided to purposively approach three different Police constabularies. The three constabularies approached had been previously highlighted in the extant literature for good practice with sex workers, or had been recognised as having high profile issues related to sex work. This approach to sampling was taken in order to explore how the various approaches either encouraged, or developed barriers to, the reporting of violent or otherwise harmful behaviours.

The sampling framework for phase 4 was again underpinned by elements of a purposive approach. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) suggest that purposive sampling is underpinned by both the participants knowledge and experience, and also their willingness to participate in the study. Once I made contact with the constabularies to participate, the emphasis then fell with the participants themselves to decide whether they felt they had the correct knowledge and understanding to contribute, and to show this willingness by volunteering for the study.

The initial email contact included details of the study and what would be requested of their constabulary should they agree to participate; I also attached information and informed consent forms for circulation. I then asked each constabulary which agreed participation to identify individuals who worked closely with sex work populations, and would therefore have the relevant experience to contribute to the study. I separately approached these individuals

regarding their potential participation in the research study. In order to ensure that individuals with experience working with sex workers are not identifiable in the data I do not include identifiable information such as participant gender or the location of the police force.

3.4.5 Field visits

Within the process of this research, I participated in 2 specific field visits. I have discussed the first of these visits above in section 3.2.4, where I spent time with 2 sex work support organisations during a working week. During this visit, I spent 3 days working out of the office of one organisation, and 1 day working with another. The purpose of this visit was to help shape the data collection tool for phase 1, and also to inform the direction of the research more generally. I did not collect any data during this visit, though I have reflected on some of my experiences later in this chapter.

Later on in the process of completing this research, I visited the support organisation with which I spent 1 day on the first field visit a second time. On this field visit, I spent 4 days working out of the offices of the service, where I was involved with activities led by the organisation and attended local sex work-related meetings with the police and the local authority. During this week, I was able to get a better feel for the types of issues faced by those engaged with the service, helping to shape my thinking for the research. The week also presented an opportunity for me to meet men engaged with sex work in order to arrange interviews, as it was for me to meet practitioners with the relevant experience. Whilst the organisation acted as a gatekeeper in that it introduced me to those with relevant experience (see section 3.7.7), it is important that I stress here, that my role and my being external to the service was made clear to participants.

3.5 About the participants

This section includes details about the participants for each of the stages of the research, including a breakdown of the some of the demographical information of those involved and the ways in which the interviews were delivered.

Phase 1 participants:

The phase 1 sample consisted of 10 male participants, one non-binary participant and one participant who self-defined their gender as being ‘cross-dressing lesbian’. Whilst I have included demographic data for each of the participants below, the survey findings presented in

the following chapters are based on the surveys completed by those who identified their gender as ‘male’.

Figure 1: Phase 1 participant table.

| Participant | Gender | Age | Sexual preference | Location | Current/historical sex work involvement | Sex work sector |
|-------------|--------------|-------|------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Male | 25-34 | Pansexual | Greater London | Current | Online |
| 2 | Male | 35-44 | Bisexual | South West | Historical | Establishment |
| 3 | Male | 18-24 | Straight | North West | Current | Through an app |
| 4 | Male | 35-44 | Gay | Greater London | Current | Through an app |
| 5 | Male | 35-44 | Bisexual | Greater London | Current | Street/Newspaper |
| 6 | Male | 18-24 | Bisexual | Yorkshire & Humber | Current | Bar/Club/Pub |
| 7 | Male | 35-44 | Gay | South East | Current | Through an app |
| 8 | Male | 25-34 | Gay | West Midlands | Historical | Online/Through an app |
| 9 | Male | 25-34 | Gay | South West | Current | Online/Through an app |
| 10 | Male | 25-34 | Gay | Greater London | Current | Online |
| 11 | Non-Binary | 45-54 | Pansexual | South West | Current | Street/Online |
| 12 | Self-defined | 55+ | Cross-dressing lesbian | - | Current | Online/Establishment |

Phase 2 participants:

The sample for the phase 2 interviews consisted of 7 participants, 6 of whom identified their gender identity as male and the remaining participant, although currently identifying as male, expressing a desire to transition their gender to live as a female in future. Two of the participants who took part in phase 1, also took part in phase 2. When asked about their sexual preference in their personal lives, 5 of the men identified as gay, 1 as bisexual and 1 as straight. The ethnic make-up of the sample included 4 white British participants, 1 mixed race British participant, 1 white non-EU citizen and 1 EU citizen. The mean age of the participants was 36 years old, with the youngest being 29 years old and the oldest 47 at the time of interview.

Five of the phase 2 interviews were completed face to face in a service-based environment, whilst one interview was performed utilising IM technology and one was performed over the telephone. I offered the service-based interview participants a ten-pound

shopping voucher for their participation, which was approved as an addition to the ethical application by the ethics committee of the Hilary Rodham Clinton School of Law. At the time of interview, 5 of the men were currently engaged with sex work and 2 were sharing their historic experience of sex working.

Figure 2: Phase 2 participant table.

| Participant | Gender | Age | Sexual preference | Location | Current/historical sex work involvement | Sex work sector |
|-----------------|--------|-----|-------------------|------------|---|------------------------------|
| Nathan | Male | 39 | Straight | South West | Current | Online |
| Kurtis | Male | 38 | Bisexual | South West | Historical | Establishment |
| Harrison | Male | 31 | Gay | North West | Current | Not specified |
| Ryan | Male | 33 | Gay | North West | Historical | Recommendation/Word of mouth |
| Lorenzo | Male | 47 | Gay | North West | Current | Street |
| Mason | Male | 29 | Gay | North West | Current | Street |
| William | Male | 33 | Gay | North West | Current | Not specified |

Phase 3 participants:

The sample of phase 3 participants consisted of 7 individuals with experience of working with projects and services who engage with male sex workers in some capacity, or sex work more generally. Of the 7 participants, 4 worked with a service primarily targeted at male sex workers, 1 with a national service for sex workers of any gender, 1 with a service aimed at female sex work and 1 with an organisation focused on substance misuse. The gender makeup of the sample was split between male (3) and female (4), and the participants had varying levels of experience.

Of the interviews, 6 were completed face to face and 1 completed over the telephone. Of the face to face interviews, 3 were completed at the offices of the service, 2 were completed in public coffee shops and 1 was completed in an office at Swansea University.

Figure 3: Phase 3 participant table.

| Participant | Gender | Location |
|---------------|--------|------------|
| Yvonne | Female | North West |
| Elliot | Male | North West |

| | | |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Neil | Male | North West |
| Angela | Female | North East |
| Louise | Female | Wales |
| Rebecca | Female | North West |
| Marcus | Male | Wales |

Phase 4 participants:

The sample of phase 4 participants consisted of 2 police officers with extensive experience of working to support sex workers in some capacity. One interview was completed face to face at the police station in which the individual worked, whilst the other was completed over the telephone. With only 2 participants involved in this phase of the research, I have purposefully avoided using a table as above and have not assigned them a pseudonym, to ensure that those involved are not identifiable.

3.6 Data analysis

With the data collection approach and methods utilised in this study, both quantitative and qualitative data sets were developed. Clarity surrounding the analysis of these data sets is important both in terms of my own procedural focus and the trustworthiness of the research according to Nowell *et al.* (2017). This section will document how the data of each phase was analysed, according to the philosophy adopted for this study.

3.6.1 Quantitative data

I analysed the quantitative data gained through the initial online survey within the Qualtrics software initially, and then exported to Microsoft Excel in order to present it in a visual form and interpret it as descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics provide a way to summarise or ‘describe’ the dataset, and include the use of frequencies, percentages, mean, median and mode (Ali and Bhaksar, 2016). The main purpose of these descriptive statistics was to inform the interview phases; however, I have also adapted the statistics for the write up phase in order to present some of the attitudes and experiences of the participants from the initial phase of this study. The Qualtrics software itself also provided visual representations of the data which I have also adapted and utilised within the finding’s chapters.

3.6.2 Qualitative data

The potential issues of third-party transcription are described by Lucas (2010), who suggests that although the researcher saves time with the initial writing up of recorded data, this is not to guarantee that they will not be required to refine the work of the transcriber once it has been thoroughly checked and cross-referenced with the original recordings. Even without mistake, the transcript effort of the professional may differ substantially from the researcher as it may be argued that transcription is not a wholly objective process of simply converting spoken word into text, but rather an interpretive process which makes meaning of spoken word, sounds, pauses and tone (Ochs, 1979). The understanding of the data taken by the transcriber may differ considerably to the researcher themselves, who may better make sense of the non-verbal communications made in their presence during the interview.

Lucas (2010) also insists that the outsourcing of transcription must also be observed with ethics in mind, and poses the question of whether it is ethically sound of a researcher to assume that the transcriber will uphold the promises made to participants surrounding confidentiality and anonymity within the informed consent process. This argument is coupled by Lucas with a concern for the transcriber themselves, particularly in research which is sensitive and perhaps distressing in nature. With my role in interpretation, the important ethical principles being adhered to and a general consideration for the quality of the research in mind, I chose to transcribe the interview data myself. I deemed it unnecessary to employ a third party, particularly when this had the potential to raise issues of ethical practice and the potential for me to become in any way distanced from the data. Indeed, the transcription process itself offered an early opportunity for me to familiarise myself with the data, and explore the themes and issues which arose from the interview discussions.

Once I transcribed the data, cross-referenced it with the original recording, and sent to the participants for their approval, I took steps to better manage the data in preparation for the analysis phase. The process of coding, described as a means of organising data and discovering themes within the text, is adopted within a grounded theory approach to analysis (Charmaz, Thornberg and Keane, 2018). This type of approach has commonly been used to inform the analytical stages of sex work studies (see for example Pitcher, 2014, Bayer *et al.*, 2014; Smith and Seal, 2008; Sagar and Jones, 2012). Essentially, a grounded theory approach to analysis entails an inductive approach to the research problem, whereby the researcher has an idea about the particular issue which they would like to investigate but approaches the issue not with a theoretical perspective in mind, but with the intention to find a new theory which is grounded within the data produced by their data collection (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

In order to code data in a way which is concurrent to a grounded theory approach, I have followed the analytical framework posed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003:44), which involves a six-part guide:

Making the text manageable:

1. Explicitly state your research concerns and theoretical framework.
2. Select the relevant text for further analysis. Do this by reading through your raw text with step 1 in mind, and highlighting the relevant text.

Hearing what was said:

3. Record repeating ideas by grouping together related passages of relevant text.
4. Organise themes by grouping repeated ideas into coherent categories.

Developing theory:

5. Develop theoretical constructs by grouping themes into more abstract concepts consistent with your theoretical framework.
6. Create a theoretical narrative by retelling the participants story in terms of the theoretical constructs.

Therefore, in keeping with Auerbach and Silverstein's guide, I first reviewed the transcripts, tidying the text from the original raw transcription and scanning for relevant text. I then imported the transcripts into NVivo 11 software, and created coding categories based upon interesting extracts and repeating ideas. Following this, I grouped together these categories into wider thematic areas, and formed concepts from the repeating ideas across these themes. At this point, I exported the data from NVivo 11 back to Microsoft Word in their coding categories, where I organised the quotes within these concepts in order to present the narrative of the discussions. An example of how concepts were created in this way is available in appendix U.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Although in social research there are no set rules of ethical practice, there are general agreements as to how ethical research should be carried out. Indeed, in social science, the issue of ethics is often surrounding a researcher's behaviour and their strategy in upholding certain

rights for their participants, including their protection from harm, protecting their anonymity and their autonomy in participation (Kitchener and Kitchener, 2009). It is argued that much of a research studies integrity and quality is founded in its ethical approach to data collection, analysis and write up (Oliver, 2010). This section will document the ethical considerations which shaped my planning and implementation of this research, documenting the foreseen risks to both researcher and participant and the policies which were adopted in order to combat them.

3.7.1 Stigmatisation and potential vulnerability

Drawing upon previous sex work research, and in keeping with the findings of the literature review it is clear that sex workers operate in a precarious position within society. This has been acknowledged in the research, and it was important that participants were made aware of the fact that they would not be identified in any way and were given details of just how this was to be assured. Section 3.7.6 describes in more detail how the identities of the participants were protected.

It was also important that I did not reinforce any existing stigma within this research, and as such I avoided certain language and terminology throughout the data collection process. For example, the term ‘prostitute’ can be highly stigmatising for a sex worker (Smith, 2013). Accordingly I also made considerations regarding the wording of questions so as not to imply that certain characteristics, such as those discussed in chapter 2, are inherent to sex work. Importantly, the approach to creating the data collection tools helped identify any initial questions which may have done so. An example of this was where I amended a question originally worded ‘How often do you use alcohol or substances while sex working?’, as this may imply that this is something all sex workers do, regardless of there being an option to answer ‘Never’. The newly worded question instead read ‘Do/did you ever use alcohol or other substances during or before the exchange takes/took place?’, with options ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very often’, including a ‘rather not say’ option.

3.7.2 The sensitive nature of the topic area

An incident of violence, whether it be sexual or physical in nature, can be a highly traumatising experience for both a victim and those close to them. In my approach I was mindful that it is focused on a highly sensitive topic area, and that discussing such incidents can often have an impact on those who have been victimised (WHO, 2007). In order to minimise the impact of this study on its participants, I put several measures into place. First of all, I ensured that the

nature of the study was well documented in the information and informed consent forms, and made clear what the questioning would be around. Here, I reminded participants that they did not have to take part, and crucially, if they were in any way distressed by the questions, they could withdraw both from future questions and have their answers to previous questions destroyed. At the point of withdrawal, I would have offered participants various avenues of support where the issues could be further discussed, through a process of signposting to various services such as:

- National Ugly Mugs
- The Armistead Centre (Merseyside)
- Male Action Project (Tyne and Wear)
- Pitstop + (South Yorkshire)
- ROAM (Edinburgh)
- 56 Dean Street (London)
- SWISH (THT) (Coventry)
- The Rainbow Project (Belfast)
- The Men's Room (Manchester)
- Promote (Bristol)

It was important at this point that I did not attempt to counsel the participants, as this would have been beyond my role as researcher. However, a week spent with organisations experienced in dealing with male sex workers meant that I was better equipped for any such incident and had the relevant information to hand. It must be noted here that no participants withdrew from the study.

As well as the right to withdraw, I also carefully considered the type of questioning that I utilised. The level of detail about an incident that I required to meet the aims of the study was minimal. The aims dictated that my line of questioning was interested in what happened and whether or not the incident was reported, and why, rather than the specific details of the incident itself. For this reason, and to minimise the risk of trauma to the participant, I only asked for the type of incident in both the survey and the interview. I acknowledge however, that little could be done to stop a participant opening up about an incident if they had wished to talk about it, even with measures put in place to prevent participants having to relive their experiences.

3.7.3 Think 21 policy

Paramount to research, and particularly to this study is the safety of participants when engaging with the research process. Because of the nature of what was being discussed, and the definition of what can be considered legal within sex work, I clearly defined from the outset that I would not allow anybody under the age of 18 to participate in this study, as an individual younger than 18 cannot legally consent to participating in sex work. Section 47 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it an offence to pay for the sexual services of an individual under 18, meaning any individual younger than 18 involved with selling sex would be considered a victim of child sexual abuse/exploitation, and not as a sex worker. I made the importance of any potential participants being aged 18 and above clear at the data collection stage, as I did the importance of being honest about their age. For each phase of the research I took a different approach to ensuring anybody under 18 could not participate.

Phase 1, the online survey, was the most difficult in ensuring the age specification for participants as the study was available online and could be completed without my presence. There were however, three opportunities for verification of age in phase 1. First was the warning that I included in a message in the information form to all participants that it is important that they do not participate in the study if they are aged under 18, second was the informed consent form where I again made it clear that anybody under 18 should not participate, and I asked participants to verify whether they understood. The third opportunity was a question within which I asked the participant to specify their age, with this, anybody who answered below 18 would be excluded from the survey and instead referred to the debrief form which includes details of organisations who can offer further support.

The nature of phase 2 of the research, the follow up interview with survey participants, was advantageous in terms of ensuring that those who took part were a minimum of 18 years old for a number of reasons. First of all, it is hoped that phase 1 of the research age vetted the participants to a sufficient extent that no individuals younger than 18 attempted to participate in the interview phase. If, however, an individual under 18 did deceive the control screens and continue to complete the survey, I put measures in place to ensure that they could not then go on to complete the interview. I made the decision to adopt a 'Think 21' approach. This is similar to the 'Think 25' approach used in relation to alcohol sales in pubs, bars and off-licence stores, where if a member of staff believes a customer is under 25, they should ask them for photo

identification to ensure that they are over 18. The ‘think 21’ measures that I adopted for this study were as follows:

- If a participant looked 21 or younger they were to be reminded of the importance of them being 18+ for the study.
- Participants were to be asked to withdraw from the study if they are in fact under 18.
- If there were any doubts about the participants age beyond this, the interview would not commence.

I made the decision to not ask for photo identification, as per the ‘Think 25’ approach, in order to protect the identity of the participants, and so as to not discourage valid participants. Instead, skills, experience and intuition that I had gained from prior work within ‘Think 25’ environments were relied upon. If for any reason the vetting process put in place in phases 1 and 2 failed, and it later came to light that a participant was lying about their age and had made an admission that they had been sex working, I would have been under an obligation to report concerns to the college safeguarding officer under university safeguarding guidelines for minors.

Phases 3 and 4 were aimed at practitioners and Police and although the likelihood of a disclosure of child sexual abuse was significantly less likely, the importance of ensuring that participants were aged 18 and above remained. The risk of a participant being under 18 for these phases was significantly reduced because of their involvement in service or police work, which was a precursor to their participation in the study. Although the risk was reduced, I again reiterated the importance of participants being 18+ in the informed consent forms for phase 3 and 4 participants, and participants were asked to confirm that they understood this before interviews commenced.

3.7.4 Risk to the researcher

As well as the potential risk posed to the participants of a study, it was also important to understand whether there were any risks posed to me as the researcher, so that any potential risk could be ameliorated, and the research could be conducted in the safest possible environment. For this research, three possible risks were identified during the ethical review process, and based on the comments and concerns raised, I adopted relevant policies. This section will discuss each of the risks highlighted, and what I did in order to reduce them.

3.7.4.1 Location of the research

The location of the research was an important consideration in terms of ethics, logistics and risk. Sex work research has often been problematic, particularly when the focus has been on the street-based sector. Researchers roaming the streets with clipboards present issues not only in terms of their own safety, but also as a disruption to business, and any potential loss of earnings this may create for the sex workers they have targeted (Shaver, 2005). This was partly the reasoning behind my adopting of an online approach to elements of this research, where my presence was felt minimally. An online approach to the initial discussions of phases 1 and 2 also reduced the risk posed to both myself and the participants, in that I could make contact remotely and not in the street. I also hoped that this would be more convenient for participants, and preferable should they not want to risk their sex working status being revealed to anyone not involved with the research.

Where I met phase 2 participants in person, interviews took place in the offices of a service. This space was both familiar to the participant and private, ensuring their comfort and safety of us both. My considerations for the location of phase 3 and 4 interviews also followed this pattern, with these interviews also mainly completed in the offices of the relevant service or police station. These spaces were considered to be safe spaces with minimal risk to both participants and I, and I considered the suitability of any public space used before the scheduled meeting.

3.7.4.2 Mental wellbeing

Another concern in terms of the risk posed to me comes from the sensitive and often graphic nature of the subject area. Concerns were raised during the ethical review process related to mine and the participants emotional wellbeing, because of the content of the research. Therefore, I put a plan in place to ensure the minimal impact of this. This work was supervised by individuals who are experienced in researching gender, sexuality and the sex industry, and were therefore able to offer pastoral support founded upon their experience. There were also university-based wellbeing services which can offer support through the research process, should it have been needed.

3.7.4.3 Online profiles

I published phases 1 and 2 of the research on my professional twitter profile which is open to the public and includes details of my name and affiliations to Swansea University. Although this can be accessed by anybody, I only use it in a professional context while talking about conferences or research in general. Any of my personal online presence on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are set to private so that contact could only be made by pre-approved individuals. For any contact regarding this research, I used university email addresses and specific professional accounts, separating my work and private life to mitigate any potential risk.

3.7.5 Informed consent

Pivotal to ethical research is the informed consent of its participants, according to many commentators (see for example Marzano, 2012; Wiles *et al.*, 2007). The need for informed consent perhaps becomes even greater when the group targeted by the research are stigmatised and potentially vulnerable, like sex workers (Shaver, 2005). The informed consent process is not only in place to ensure that participants agree to have their views included in a research project at the beginning, but an ongoing process in which the participant is fully informed about the research and their own involvement, and what it could potentially mean for them (Wiles *et al.*, 2005). In this research, I took informed consent very seriously, and implemented measures to ensure that anybody who participated in the research was fully informed and had consented to participation, under a full understanding of what was to be expected of them.

In order to do this, I developed an information sheet (see appendices L, M, N and O) which included what the study was aiming to find out, what was expected of the participant in relation to the phase that they were taking part in and a reiteration of the fact that participation was completely voluntary, and that it was their right to withdraw at any point. I then reiterated these rights in the informed consent sheet (see appendices I, J, K and L), which participants were asked to sign or agree to verbally, depending on the phase in which they were involved in. For each phase of the research, I developed a different information and informed consent form, reflecting the nature of that phase and its participants. For phase 1, the information and informed consent forms were integrated into the beginning of the survey itself on Qualtrics. This meant that participants had to have consented to the research before seeing any questions. For phase 2 interviews, I utilised paper-based information and informed consent sheets for face to face interviews, and where interviews were done over the internet emailed the informed

consent and information forms prior to the interview, and recorded consent digitally. For phases 3 and 4, I again utilised paper-based forms where interviews were completed face to face, and I emailed copies of the forms to those who participated over the phone before the call. I then reminded participants of their rights and asked to confirm their consent to participate at the beginning of the call.

3.7.6 Data protection

3.7.6.1 Protecting identities

In order to protect the identity of participants, I did not include any information which would leave the participant identifiable in the write up of findings, and I gave each participant a pseudonym or identifier rather than using their own names. I made this clear to participants in the informed consent stage. I also took care to ensure that any identifiable information given in the interview or survey phase, such as place names or the names of clients or friends, were not written into the research. If there was any identifiable information within a quote, I amended with a note on redaction – such as (place name removed).

I also implemented measures to ensure that practitioner participants remained anonymous, again using pseudonyms for them. The only information that I utilised alongside data gathered from practitioner participants, was the fact that they were practice based. To avoid identifying this section of the sample, I did not include project names and locations. It might have been helpful had I been able to identify the location of a service so as to draw connections with policing practice, service provision and reporting behaviours in certain areas, however with such limited support available for male sex workers, identifying an area would almost certainly have identified a project.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the police participants I did not include their name, role, gender and constabulary alongside any quotes. With there only being two police participants in the study, I used the names of ‘Police Officer 1’ and ‘Police Officer 2’ instead of pseudonyms, this made it clear that the quote originated from somebody who works within the police in some capacity in order to provide some context, but did not gender the participants as a pseudonym might have. I also took care to avoid identifying participants with the information they provided, with details such as place names left out of any published data. The difficulty with this however was that approaches towards sex work can differ substantially between constabularies, with some working in unique and innovative ways to police sex work related issues. Therefore, I took care to ensure that discussions of practice could be presented in a way which did not reveal the constabulary in question.

3.7.6.2 Data storage

In compliance with GDPR, I ensured that any data that I held which could identify a participant was held securely. Once I collected all of the data from the survey, I exported it into an Excel document, which I stored on my password and fingerprint protected laptop, only accessible to me. This is also true of my Qualtrics account, which is only accessible with a password which is only known to me. I gathered interview data using a Dictaphone. I then stored these recordings on the password and fingerprint protected laptop and deleted from the Dictaphone. I stored any identifiable data, such as the email address of those who wished to participate in follow up interviews separately to any other data, so that the answers to the survey remained anonymous.

3.7.7 Use of gatekeepers

As discussed in section 3.4.2 I initially met a number of the men involved in the interview phase of this research whilst based at a support service who deal primarily with male sex workers. Although I discuss them here as gatekeepers, I believe the label to be problematic on some levels, particularly with previous use of gatekeeping in research being criticised where studies have bypassed the consent of the participants themselves, with access to the research space and consent both granted by the gatekeeper (Homan, 2001). Indeed, whilst the service in question gave me access to the research space insofar as it facilitated my meeting of a number of men who had the relevant experience to contribute to the study, I took great efforts to separate their involvement in the research and their involvement with the service. This included ensuring that the men who I engaged with understood their participation or non-participation would not impact the support that they received at the service, that they were free to not talk with me about the research should they so wish and also to make clear that I was not affiliated with the service beyond them helping me with my research.

3.8 Reflections on the research process

Although I have made every effort to design this study in a way which perfectly suits the stated aims, captures the voices of those whose reality matter most and is guided by ethical principles throughout, to not acknowledge the limitations of the approach would be a dis-service to the complexities of research within this area. I have a number of reflections on the research process which I will discuss in this coming section, though not all relate directly to limitations of the

study. The discussion within this section also includes an example of practitioner discomfort which I observed within the research process, and also reflections on my identity and position within the female researcher-dominated environment of sex work study.

One major reflection on the research process that I have concerns the result of the Twitter campaign and the subsequent online recruitment of participants. Whilst the tweets advertising the study reached a significant number of Twitter users – thanks largely to a retweet from male adult performer Jason Domino – the sample for both the phase 1 survey and the phase 2 participants (those of whom contacted in this way) were far smaller than I had originally envisaged. Whilst I designed phase 1 in particular to inform the later phases rather than form conclusions in itself, the sample size meant that there was no opportunity to generalise the findings of this phase or create a national picture of the experiences of men who sell sex, as there may have been had more people got involved. Whilst I have stated earlier in this chapter that this was never my intention, further participation in the survey may have helped create a more rounded perspective to inform the interview phases. Indeed, it is difficult to determine why only 10 men had got involved with this phase given the exposure the survey received, though questions may be raised about just how suitable the passive approach was. It may make sense to ensure that any future work that I do in this area combines this passive and wide-reaching approach with a more direct and active pursuit of participants, though sensitivity would be required in designing this in a way which works. Similarly, phase 2 of the study only saw two men become involved through the internet-based advertisement of the study, despite a second Twitter campaign calling for participants directly to the interview. Smaller sample sizes for sex work focused research are not uncommon (see for example Kuhar and Pajnik, 2019; Hanks, 2019), and do not necessarily detract from the value of the study. Indeed, the narrative of the men involved is powerful, as will be demonstrated in the coming chapters, and should not be snubbed on account of its generalisability to the wider population of male sex workers. Whilst the 17 total men who participated in this work cannot be considered representative of the national picture of male sex work, they do demonstrate the complexity of their own relationships with the sex industry, violence (and otherwise harmful behaviours) and vulnerability through their experiences. Therefore, I feel that although the sample size is limited, there is strength in this work through this narrative.

Another reflection which I wanted to raise within this section concerned an interview with one of the practitioner participants of phase 3, who had arranged to meet me in a public place to complete the interview. This individual, as evidenced by their narrative, had spent the majority of their career working with sex workers dealing with those most likely to be

vulnerable and socio-economically unstructured. The majority of their discussion focused on substance misuse, physical presentation and exploitation, though I had noted throughout that these were discussed in terms which were in themselves perpetuating of stigma. One particular moment of note which I wish to reflect on is when another table of guests sat near us in the coffee shop in which we completed the interview. The new guests were around two metres away from us (at the time this was not the norm) and could potentially have heard elements of the conversation should the background noise levels drop. Whilst this itself is a reflection on the use of public space as a venue in which to complete an interview, it was the participants' reaction which was of interest given the nature of their daily involvement with sex workers and exposure to the topic area of this research. The practitioner began to minimise the volume of their voice every time they said the phrase 'sex work'. What this represented to me was their internalisation of the stigma associated with sex work, and their own reaction to potentially being heard talking about a taboo subject. Interestingly for me, combined with their own stigmatising narrative, was how their internalisation of this stigma and reaction to this scenario may inform their work with sex workers. If meeting a service user in a public place, does this individual avoid the use of the 'S' and 'W' words just in case there is somebody in earshot? When meeting other agencies who are not sex work focused is the individual afraid to discuss sex working openly? In many cases this sensitivity of lowering their voice to ensure privacy may be appropriate, particularly in respecting the confidentiality of service users. However, this discomfort in discussing sex work for me was symptomatic of the individual's moral standpoint on the issue, which was also clear throughout the interview in the way in which they discussed sex work. Their unwillingness to talk openly about the subject maintains the notion that it is wrong, and therefore does nothing to challenge the stigmas faced by sex workers of all genders. I believe it worth noting at this point that had the interview been with a male sex working participant, discussing personal experience, I would have discussed potential options for resuming the interview at a time or a place more suitable. However, the feeling was that this discussion of experiences within a work context should have been framed by a level of professionalism whereby open discussions could be held. For example, I completed interviews with practitioners in similar conditions and such a reaction was not evident in these interactions.

The above is not to say however, that I am completely dismissing the impacts of secondary stigma. I myself have experienced this whilst in the process of completing this study on numerous occasions. I have sensed the discomfort of others in their questions to me about

the study, and the suspicion hidden within their interest in the reasons why I got involved in this work. Similar experiences are noted by Hammond and Kingston (2014:343) who note:

‘Researching a stigmatized topic led to us being associated with the negative attributes and assumptions made about prostitution, albeit in a less discriminatory manner.’

Indeed, I have experienced online trolling related to my support for sex workers rights when Tweeting live from a conference, though I do acknowledge that any of my own experiences pale in comparison to those stigmatised directly for their involvement.

There have however, been some difficulties related to my own identity as straight, white and male. The irony of this statement is not lost on me, and typing it felt contradictory and hypocritical in many ways. I understand the privilege associated with my identity, and I understand that many of those which I have interacted with in this process do not benefit from all of these characteristics in the same way in which I do. Within this field however, I have been somewhat of an outlier. For example, I have sat within an office where there were discussions of how the others in the room hated straight, cis-gendered, white men and their contribution to many of the problems faced by sex workers (an argument which I agree in part with). I have been congratulated at a conference for ‘taking on the feminists’, when my work is rather an extension of feminist thought in this field, filling the gaps through which male identities have slipped. However, it is this perspective of my work being contradictory to feminism which has perhaps dictated my position within the field and justified my existence within this space to those who cannot comprehend the value of feminist principles in understanding the experiences of male identities which do not conform to heteronormative and hegemonic standards. Whilst other academics, by and large, have been comfortable with my identity as a man researching the experiences of men, I have witnessed the discomfort caused by similar identities where the research is with female participants. This hostility may well contribute to the continuing lack of male researchers within this space, particularly men outlined as the problem as per the above (see Hanks, 2019a).

Whilst managing my own identity in these wider academic and social spaces has been important, the most significant interaction in which it has played a part has been in interactions within the research itself. As I have discussed in this chapter, I am an outsider to all of the three groups involved with this work. I was however, able to build a strong rapport with those who took part, and research interactions have been comfortable. This was particularly true of the

time I spent with the sex work support service, where I was able to spend time with the men and women engaged with the service to socialise outside of a research context. We were engaged in a craft activity and had dinner together at the service, and despite initial suspicion of my presence, the group opened up with me and included me within the ‘banter’ being directed around the table. Being Welsh in an English setting, I could not escape the comments on my funny pronunciations, and there were particular disagreements about the proper name of a bread roll. Importantly, class, race, gender and even sex working status moved to the background within these interactions, which were important in shaping our formal research interactions throughout the week. Spending such time with these men and women was invaluable in its impact on the research, and I cannot express strongly enough, my gratitude for the service in accommodating me as they did. This, however, is my own observation of the interaction and I cannot be certain that others in the group perceived the relationship in this way. These factors may indeed have played some role in the way in which those involved directed their discussions with me, as no doubt those involved made their own judgements of my identity and character. Therefore, I have been mindful of this in the ways in which both the research was designed, and the results presented.

3.9 Chapter summary

The primary aim of this chapter has been to outline the methodology of this study. Within the chapter I have considered how feminist standpoint principles have guided my approach, and their applicability to a study primarily concerned with the reality of men. I have challenged notions of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ research, highlighting how my relative naivety to the reality of those who take part in the study meant that even the most basic of questions were raised, and my own assumptions were limited. Despite my ‘outsider’ status, I have utilised engagement with sex workers and those with experience of working with sex workers, to develop a phased study which has been informed by ‘insider’ knowledge throughout. Indeed, the phased approach combining an informative quantitative element with detailed qualitative discussion also ensured that discussions were based on insider knowledge.

Within the chapter I have also outlined the sampling methods which I implemented for the work, with predominantly internet-enabled and service attending male sex workers contacted to take part in the study. The use of practitioner and police narratives to support the voices of the male sex workers themselves provides an encompassing perspective of the issue, detailing both how the systemic issues are experienced by male sex workers, and also how they

are perceived and approached by agencies seeking to support them. Throughout the coming chapters, these voices will be presented within the thematic areas emergent from the data, including a look at the significance of masculinity within discussions of potential vulnerability and a focus on experiences of harmful behaviours and their subsequent reporting. Firstly, however, the next chapter will outline the distinctions between behaviours and identity discussed by those who took part in the study, highlighting how male sex workers may seek to negotiate how their identity is perceived to limit the impact of sex work related stigma.

4 Distinguishing behaviour and identity

This chapter is the first of three to present the themes emergent from the data. Through analysing the way in which the men involved spoke about sex work, and supported by practitioner experiences of working with male sex workers, clear distinctions between behaviour and identity were evident within sections of the sample. Sex work was something that these particular men did, but there were indications that they did not want it to shape their identity and how the world perceived them. Conversely, for some of the men, sex work was more of a fixed element of their lives and therefore they were more readily accepting of the associated identity. This chapter will discuss these differences in the ways in which a sex working identity was perceived by the men involved, outlining the implications for vulnerability and risk of harm. The chapter also includes discussions of the overlaps between the gay social scene and male sex work, and the impact of these overlaps on discussions of identity, adding to previous understandings of the fluidity of male sex work. Issues of behaviour, identity and space are then discussed in terms of the perceived differences between male and female sex work, highlighting how despite there being similarities between the two, there is enough difference to render some gendered approaches to supporting sex workers redundant for the men involved in this work.

4.1 Work and identity

Discussions of identity are largely concerned with what it means to be one's self, or to belong to a certain group (Howard, 2000). These identities are constructed often through a combination of an individual's values, their personal characteristics and the roles which they perform socially (Oyserman, Elmore and Smith, 2012). For example, stereotypically one may expect the caring and kind nature of a nurse, or the sternness of a judge. Importantly, although an individual may have an element of their identity which is most widely recognised, their presentation and the subsequent perception of their identity may often depend on with whom the individual is interacting. Taking the above as examples, to the children of the nurse being refused a later bedtime, they may indeed see their parent as stern like the judge. Within this interaction, the nurse is acting within their role as parent, and therefore there may be differences in how their identity is perceived in this form and by these observers.

This is an example of symbolic interaction, whereby the actions of the individual, in this example the nurse, influence the perception of their identity within a particular context (see Stryker, 2008). Despite the behaviours of an individual not necessarily being congruent

with the way in which their identity is constructed, the way in which an individual acts and presents often does help to shape the way in which they are perceived by others. Importantly within the above example, the identity of the individual is dependent not only upon the context within which they are being observed, but also on who is observing them. Indeed, Burke (1991) suggests that an individual's identity can be broken down into their own perception of self, and then the way that this is reflected in how others see them. Importantly, Burke suggests that if an individual feels that they may be perceived in a way which is in contrast to their own internalised identity, their behaviour may seek to influence this perception. According to Goffman (1956) social interactions and behaviours are generally underpinned by a performance, aimed at projecting a particular image of self. Goffman refers to performances where others are watching and where they are not, distinguishing between the idealised self and the true self. Identity reflects both this performance of self and an individual's wider behaviours, with the two often negotiated in order to present the image of self which most closely resembles the way in which the individual wants to be perceived internally.

Identity, therefore, is neither fixed nor permanent if it is open to negotiation as Goffman suggests. The parent perceived as stern by their children in one interaction may later be thought of by them as kind and caring, dependent on their performance within that interaction. Interestingly within Goffman's theory on the presentation of self, he refers to performances where others are watching and those where they are not, distinguishing between the two as the idealised and the true self. In order to align these two semblances of identity, it is the above-mentioned symbolic interaction through performance which helps an individual negotiate their internal perception of self and the outside perception of their identity. In later work, Goffman (1963:23) discusses the management of stigmatised identities, such as that of 'prostitutes, drug addicts, homosexuals, alcoholics, and other shamed groups'. Within this work, Goffman demonstrates how an individual may manage a stigmatised identity in a number of ways, including making changes to their lifestyle and/or appearance, compensating for their stigmatised characteristics and refusing societal 'norms'.

Reflective of the stigma associated with sex work and otherwise transactional sex, some of those involved with sex work attempt to reject or manage the identity which is associated with the behaviour, performing in a way which aims to influence how they are perceived by others (see for example Hanks, 2019). Orchard and colleagues (2013) note this management process, asserting that identity management is affected not only by societal stigma around sex work, but also the associations with other identities, such as drug-using identities for those with substance misuse issues. The women within their sample negotiated stigma in the way in which

they presented their sex work, and integral to this were discussions of various identities *within* sex work, distinguishing between forms of work hierarchically and disassociating themselves from elements of the sex work industry which are further stigmatised.

For a male sex worker, navigating the identities associated with sex working may raise further difficulty, with their behaviours in some cases bridging sex work, substance use and unstructured lifestyle, and sex between men. Oselin (2018), in her study of male sex workers involved with an American support service, found that the men engaged in forms of ‘identity talk’, reflecting either their acceptance or rejection of the sex work identity. Within this, Oselin argues that the way in which an individual presented their identity reflected their life trajectory, categorising the men’s ‘identity talk’ to those in ‘recovery’, those informed by a ‘street code’ and those who adopt the ‘professional sex worker identity’. Whilst all three categories of men had engaged in sex work behaviours, both those within the ‘recovery’ and ‘street code’ groups were keen to reject the identity, for reasons largely dependent on their categorisation. Those in ‘recovery’ had addressed or were addressing their housing, substance related or financial needs through the service and had stopped sex working. The men categorised as being informed by a ‘street code’ had various streams of income, including robbery and drug dealing, and for them, sex work is an option only if absolutely required. Interestingly, these men all identified themselves as straight and were keen to stress how their behaviours did not include becoming the submissive partner, referring to the receptive partner as the ‘weaker one’. The remaining group, those with a ‘professional sex worker identity’, readily accept the sex work identity and discuss this as a lifestyle, rather than a resource which is tapped in to when needed.

Despite being presented within categories which reflect the U.S legal framework of sex work and are at times stigmatising, Oselin’s work presents an interesting way of understanding male sex workers presentation of their own identities, which are in some ways reflected within this work. Within the interview phase, the participants make important distinctions between sex working and adopting the identity of a sex worker. Like in Oselin’s work, three of the men in particular were keen to distance themselves from a sex work identity, though all were able to identify their sex work behaviours. Indeed, important distinctions are made between behaviour and identity within this section, for example Yvonne makes an interesting observation about how some of the men engaged with her project, even if they do sell sex regularly, do not embrace the identity of a sex worker. Instead, sex work is a ‘means to an end’ for many of the men which the service engages with:

The immediacy is not there maybe, the direct link is not there because they're not seeing themselves as a sex worker specifically, they see themselves as maybe somebody who has been treated shit by the system and they do sex work.

We do see people who are sex working really, really regular but it's not their identity.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

Here, Yvonne makes a clear distinction between behaviour and identity which was echoed throughout four of the seven male interview participants narrative. Despite largely being comfortable with the use of the term sex work, and identifying their behaviours as relevant to the subject, these men were keen to highlight their identity and aspirations outside of sex work. For example, Harrison identifies his employment as being his role within the catering sector, and outlines his aspirations and long-term career goals in the arts. He describes his sex work as being more sporadic and need-based, whilst also demonstrating a dislike of value-laden terms used to describe his transactional sex:

When I am talking about transacting sex, this whole topic how am I best referring to it? Is transacting sex ok?

Jordan (Researcher)

Yeah, I actually think that that's a really nice way of putting it. I mean it was mentioned earlier today to me, prostitution and it just put an uneasy point in me.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

How would you define your employment status?

Jordan (Researcher)

Part time employed, and volunteer work.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

Oh cool! What sort of work is this?

Jordan (Researcher)

It's a café, and then a homeless charity is my volunteer work. Other than that, I've got a small element of self-employment which is as a visual artist.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

When did you start transacting sex?

Jordan (Researcher)

When I was in my early 20s there was a small amount, when I had major bills, but other than that being here in (place name) and becoming homeless, living in a van that's basically where it started. With no money, trying to get life back on track. It's been 8 months, 9 months.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

How often do you transact sex?

Jordan (Researcher)

It's probably one job every couple of weeks. It's just to get me out of strife, get some money in my pocket and food in my stomach.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

Harrison highlights his dislike for the term prostitution, and how this brings about feelings of unease. This point is indicative of not only his unease with the term, but with what the term represents. Prostitution is a term with negative connotations and is most often applied to female sex workers; for Harrison to embrace this description of his behaviour would be for him to internalise these and adopt the identity which is associated with the term. For Harrison, sex work is something which he has turned to when needed, rather than being something which contributes to who he is and his wider lifestyle. He identifies his sex working as a means of supporting him through difficult times rather than his full-time aspiration or lifestyle and he remains engaged in sex work when his wider needs require him to be. By discussing his more legitimised streams of income, his volunteer work and future plans, Harrison attempts to manage the perception of his identity by outlining his social roles outside of sex work. He also describes his distaste for labels such as prostitution. This is a good example of 'meaningful

behaviour' (Burke, 1991), which works to influence a social interaction in order to match the external assessments of an individual's identity with their own internal standard. In a similar fashion, other interview participants were keen to stress their aspirations outside of sex work, and reiterate that they had turned to sex work in times of need, rather than it being a consistent feature of their lifestyle. In this abstract, William describes a short-term financial need as being a motivational factor for his engagement in transactional sex, having earlier highlighted his previous work within the beauty industry and his long-term aspiration to perform in drag professionally:

I have done it recently, yeah. That's just through being unemployed, newly off the street and having money sanctioned out of me you know through this universal credit thing. Universal credit has been set up now and it's a bit more of an umbrella system where they can link into all of the different councils across the country so people who have been anywhere else and been in debt with those councils, it's all linked in now. So, one by one they come up and take the money back, but they don't give any notice. It's like I'm being paid £190 tomorrow for 5 weeks and I've got to put £30 towards the rent top up and then bills. Where is the money for the fucking food? By the time you get to that point you just want to go and get smashed off your face. Then you're left to pick up the pieces, you know what are you going to do? Blowjob in the (place name), great, all round, let's do it.

William (Sex working participant)

William's discussion of the aspects of his identity outside of sex work, whilst highlighting how his sex work is primarily driven by his short term need for money is indicative of his rejection of the sex work identity. Towards the end of the abstract there is a feeling that for William, the options are limited in the face of financial strain. Similarly, Lorenzo discusses his sex work as being based around need. His unemployment after immigration to the UK from an EU country presented a short-term financial need, and transactional sex provided a means which he could raise money in a more immediate fashion. He has since returned to sex work, but again he was keen to reject the identity of a sex worker, highlighting how he only returned to sex work because he finished working elsewhere:

Do you currently do sex work?

Jordan (Researcher)

I did it when I arrived in the UK, I was unemployed I needed money, so I started to do it until I found a job for 9 months. I finished this job and I started it again. When I get a job, I finish.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

When did you start sex working?

Jordan (Researcher)

When I was 21, not always though. I don't consider it as my job.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

An important distinction between Lorenzo, William, Harrison and the men in Oselin's (2018) study who continued to sex work whilst simultaneously rejecting the identity of sex worker, is that whilst Oselin discussed this rejection by straight men, the men within this study identified their personal sexual preference as gay. Whilst there were gay men in Oselin's study who did also reject the identity, these were mostly those who were categorised as 'recovering' from sex work and had therefore stopped sex working or were in the process of doing so. Although Lorenzo, William and Harrison did not sex work full time, all three discussed intermittent and recent involvement. Comparing the two studies, it is clear that sexual preference nor ongoing involvement are a pre-cursor to an acceptance of the identity. Instead, there is a significance placed on the way in which sex work is performed and the reasons for doing so. The narratives of Harrison, William and Lorenzo provide an interesting glimpse into an identity management process, in that their transacting of sex is temporal and sporadic, rather than being a consistent feature of their lives. Their sex working is one of many aspects of their wider identity, and they manage the impression of its significance for them by emphasising these other aspects. Sex work, for these men, is something which they do and not something which they are. The implications of this negotiation of identity is that responses to sex work are often shaped by identity, whether that be specific policing approaches seeking to support sex workers or services set out to provide specific interventions for sex workers. Whilst these may well be based rather on the identity than the internalisation of sex work labels, the stigma associated with the label may well be enough for some to avoid such a support framework which they do

not see as being applicable to them and their identity. The related implications for vulnerability and risk of harm are discussed in detail in sections 4.4 and 8.3.

For another three of the men interviewed within this study however, sex work was a more significant element of their identity. Oselin (2018:11) discusses the adoption of a professional sex worker identity, highlighting how these individuals discussed their ‘ongoing acceptance’ of sex work, and often frame their work as ‘empowering’. More broadly, professionalism is associated with the engagement in an activity as a main occupation, and with a competency which suggests that the individual is capable of providing reliable and quality work in the field. The perceived professionalism of an individual engaged in sex work is dependent on a variety of factors, including the context of their involvement in the work. For example, street-based sex work has been perceived as a lesser professional sector of the industry, often characterised by substance misuse and chaotic lifestyle (Mellor and Lovell, 2012). Previous literature has considered this to resemble survival sex, with individuals interacting with the sex work industry to meet specific needs as opposed to generating a more regular or full-time source of income (Davies and Feldman, 1999). Whilst Lorenzo and Harrison did not describe any problematic substance misuse within their interviews, it is clear that their engagement in sex work was very much driven by the need for immediate capital gain to meet specific needs. For some within this research however, sex work was a more consistent activity within their lives, becoming a steadier or perhaps foundational source of income.

Focusing on the phase 1 survey findings, 8 of the men were currently exchanging sexual services and of these, 4 described their sex work to be their full-time occupation. Of those currently sex working but not as their main source of income, 2 were engaging in transactional sex on a weekly basis, and the other 2 on a fortnightly and monthly basis. Although the question did not go so far as exploring how their participation in sex work influenced their perception of their identity, it is clear that for the men involved in this element of the study, sex work was a fairly frequent activity.

Interestingly, perhaps influenced by the online sampling method used for the survey phase of the research, 9 of the 10 men were using the internet or mobile applications to facilitate their sex work or were working off-street. Kuhar and Pajnik (2018) found that the participants who utilised the internet to manage their sex work were the most organised within their sample, and off-street sex workers are typically less likely to be involved with substance use or otherwise chaotic lifestyles (Balfour and Allen, 2014). If online and off-street sex work are considered to represent the more professional end of the spectrum of sex work behaviours, it

is clear for the most part that the survey sample were more likely to be professional in their work.

Within the interviews there were further discussions of more regular and organised involvement in sex work, which also gave some indication of the particular participants adoption of the sex work identity. Nathan for example, despite only sex working a couple of times a month, makes distinctions between himself and those not engaged in sex work:

I tell them that if that's the case I find something else I find attractive...my masculinity might be more flexible and open to change than non-sex workers... 🙋

Nathan (Sex working participant)

This highlights to some extent Nathan's willingness to accept a sex work identity, distinguishing between himself and non-sex workers in this extract. Further along the interview Nathan highlights how he must market himself like any other 'business'. His approach to sex work gives an indication of a level of professionalism, which may explain his willingness to accept the identity synonymous with his working behaviours. Indeed, his work is organised, using the internet to facilitate his bookings, and he describes himself as part time employed in both his sex working and his 'civvy' occupation. Seeing his work as employment is very much indicative of Nathan's professional identity and is very much in contrast with the way in which the men in the previous section presented their relationship with sex work.

What may distinguish Nathan from all of the other participants in the interviews is that he is a straight man. Whilst straight male sex workers have in some instances been seen to be more chaotic and driven by survival needs, previous studies have been limited to where the individual is providing sexual services to other men (Logan, 2010). Nathan works exclusively with single women and couples and therefore, he may not internalise the stigma associated with same sex interaction, whether others perceive him to have sex with men or not. For Nathan, his sale of sex to women may even be reaffirming of his masculinity rather than posing a threat to it. As a straight male sex worker having sex with women, he may avoid many of the negative connotations which shroud sex work as a whole, with his position within the industry often viewed in mythic terms because of its perceived rarity (Berg, Molin and Nanavati, 2019). This may partly influence his acceptance of the identity, as despite wider negative perceptions, his position as an outlier may mean that his experience of stigma is reduced when compared to men who sell sex to other men.

Whilst Nathan's narrative is somewhat rare, particularly given the relative lack of research attention paid to female purchasers of sex, he does share characteristics related to the regularity and organisation of an individual's engagement with sex work with other participants, which may go some way as to indicating their professionalism. Ryan provides another example of more regular and professional involvement in the sex industry, despite his initial motivations for sex work being financially driven in a way similar to Harrison, William and Lorenzo. In his interview, Ryan describes his work as being his full-time source of income, whilst also discussing his regular clientele and giving an indication of identity in his interaction with the Police:

I had really good, regular, clients. If they couldn't come, then they just let me know so that I could get someone else booked in.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

I had told the police that I was a sex worker so if I did ever go out to meet someone and I got injured, if they came across me they knew precisely that I was a sex worker and they could deal with it in a more professional manner.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

For Ryan, like Nathan, sex work became a more prominent, regular and organised feature of his life. He shows a clear willingness to adopt the sex work identity by identifying himself to the police in his area and discussing his work. Within this extract is also a level of professionalism demonstrated by his foresight and identification of these safety measures. His narrative paints a picture of career sex work, where other discussions have been focused more so around issues of unstable housing, access to essential resources and generally less organised lifestyles which meant that the individuals required short term solutions to their financial situations.

Clear from Nathan and Ryan's narratives, combined with the men from the previous section and the existing literature, is that identity can very much be influenced by lifestyle, condition and behaviour, though it is not pre-determined or fixed. All of these men are engaged with sex work behaviours, though not all have accepted sex work as an identity. Identity is rather open to negotiation, dependent on its internal embodiment and the individual's performance of self. My findings in this context support the work of Hanks (2019), who

outlines how the female sex workers working within establishments who took part in his study managed their identities and highlighted their prospects outside of a sex work context to do so. From the findings above, a man who sells sex does not necessarily adopt the identity of a sex worker if he does not see himself as such, despite his behaviours being congruent with the sex worker identity. Although those deemed more professional within this section were presented as more likely to embrace the identity, this is not to suggest that all of those who adopt a professional approach to the work will embrace the identity, nor does it mean that all of those who lead more chaotic lifestyles will reject the identity. It is plausible that sex work is but a single element of a wider and more complex identity for many of the men, and the way in which they identify themselves will be dependent upon their own narrative and their internalisation of the many environmental issues which surround male participation in transactional sex. Importantly within the sample of this work, however, those who identified sex work as being a more significant element of their lives also demonstrated a greater degree of control of their work, in that their sex work transactions were more structured and organised and perhaps, to a degree, safer. Therefore, the negotiation of a sex work identity may have direct implications for vulnerability and the risk of harm, in that those who participate in sex work in a less structured and needs-based way may be less likely to adopt measures designed to protect them during their transactional interactions than those who accept its significance to their lives, and some men may also be excluded by policy and service design fundamentally shaped by a sex work identity which they do not see as fitting of them.

4.2 Cruising for opportunity

Another factor shaping the sex work identity presented by the men within this study, was the often-opportunistic way in which their work manifests. It has been noted above that for some, sex work is sporadic rather than frequent, more impulsive than organised. When the work is less formalised, there must be spaces within which it is facilitated. Typical anecdotes limit sex work spaces to the street corner, the massage parlour, the phone box advertisement and more recently the website or app. Many of such anecdotes are not redundant, the men within the sample discuss some of these spaces within which their work manifested, though they equally highlighted how their work digressed into spaces more commonly associated with casual sex between men.

Previous studies of male sex work have often highlighted these spaces within which men have operated, noting the overlap between the transactional sex scene and the gay casual

sex scene. and Laing (2012) highlight a pattern whereby the men sought clients within bars and pubs, but mainly focused their efforts of attracting clients within the public sex scene where men were seeking sex with men, referred to as ‘the beat’. Within this beat the men made important distinctions between those looking for casual and paid sex, with certain behaviours denoting the intention of the individual. The boundaries of paid and casual sex may be less clear in some cases, however. Niccolai and colleagues (2013) discuss the use of a wider range of social venues to meet clients, including gay bars, cruising clubs and saunas. Whilst these venues may not operate as specific paid sex domains, interactions within the setting may transgress into a transactional agreement. Indeed Ellison (2017) highlights how some of the men within his study had not intended there to be a financial benefit to their casual sex but had been propositioned and had taken the opportunity.

What is clear from the existing literature is that male sex work is often closely linked with both the gay social and casual sex scenes, and because of this, can be quite opportunistic in its nature. Whilst many of the men within this study discussed selling sex through more conventional means, the use of these spaces was also apparent. Kurtis, for example, describes how he was more fluid in his approach to finding clients:

I was an escort, full-service escort... So, for the majority of my career I worked in a brothel, but then I also done a little bit of like, what I'd describe as hustling like picking people up in cinemas and stuff like that.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Kurtis' narrative represents both a more traditional space, in a brothel, and in a public sex setting less recognised by the existing sex work literature. Interestingly, by working in both of these settings his work is both structured and opportunistic in nature, and he shows a fluid attempt to pursue opportunities. Ellison and Weitzer (2017) also noted that the men within their sample displayed such a fluidity, actively seeking business rather than passively waiting for clients to seek them out. The utilisation of a gay cruising scene or a public sex environment facilitates this, with those frequenting the area or establishment sharing a common understanding of the ways in which the space is used and mostly seeking similar interactions.

Whilst Kurtis only describes interacting with these spaces to sell sex, Mason describes utilising the space for both casual and transactional sexual interactions. For him, the scene presents both social and financial opportunity, though whilst talking about this he recognises that some within the setting were utilising it exclusively for transactional interactions:

I met a few people, especially down the (public sex setting), they won't do anything with anyone without money. The (public sex setting) is somewhere that I can dance away from the men but also that to me is kind of cruising. You know like public toilets, like cruising areas.

Mason (Sex working participant)

The space discussed here by Mason is very much in a public space, centrally located in a large city. Whilst the space is accessible to the general public, those who frequent it are mainly limited to those who are seeking sex with men and it is mostly private enough for the transaction to both be arranged and fulfilled in the area. Mason discusses the setting throughout his interview in social, sexual and transactional terms. For him, and many others, the setting is more than where he sells sex.

Whilst the nature of female street sex work means that it is arranged in a public setting, the boundaries between heteronormative public sex and sex work settings are far more clearly defined. Elliot approaches this subject in his assessment of male sex work within the public setting in his services area:

I think with male sex work at least street sex work in (place name) there were a few more grey areas between kind of cruising and sex work, if that makes sense. The cruising scene, and the sex work scene are kind of blurred in a way that I'm not sure it is with female sex work. And so yeah, I think with male sex street sex work, male street sex work in (place name), the cruising scene and the sex work scene is just blurred a little bit and it's like, sometimes oral sex or other sexual acts are going to happen for free. Sometimes it might be like, actually, will you pay me a bit of money beforehand or even afterwards you know, and those lines just blurred a little bit.

Elliot (Practitioner)

Elliot highlights how for some within the cruising scene, the promise of payment may encourage engagement in sex acts with individuals who they may not ordinarily engage with. Police officer 2 also discussed the blurring of boundaries between casual and paid sex in the male sex work scene:

Male sex workers operate within a culture where, the gay sex scene is very different to the heterosexual sex scene in terms of promiscuity, numbers of partners, the way they are operating. Male sex workers may be operating with profiles on Grindr where they are having casual sexual relationships in a non-commercial sense at certain points, but also having paid encounters. I've spoken to one male sex worker who described the path where he said 'look I'm on Grindr, if I have an encounter and it's someone who I fancy and I want to have sex with them then I don't treat it as a commercial sexual interaction, but if I meet someone who I am not particularly interested in and they still want to have sex, then I will consider it a commercial interaction'.

Police officer 2

In both police officer 2 and Elliot's narratives, men's involvement in sex work is often less about organised or formal sex work, and more about an opportunistic transaction with sexual activity. Although the act in itself is a sex work behaviour, the wider identity surrounding consistent involvement in sex work may not be applicable or adopted in the same way. Indeed, as discussed earlier in this chapter, for men who engaged less formally in transactional sex, sex work was something which they did rather than forming their identity. Indeed, police officer 2 picks up this point in his interview, continuing to discuss the impact of this more casual approach to sex work on the identities of the men:

I think female sex workers are more clear when they are saying this is a commercial exchange, this is me in my sex working mode and this is me in my private life, me having a relationship outside of my sex work. Yes, there is some transition, but it is more segmented. With the male sex work, there are some male sex workers who possibly don't even identify as sex workers. Who are, say a promiscuous gay male, who is having sex with lots of different people and some of those interactions may be formally commercial exchanges.

Police officer 2

In the above descriptions of the opportunistic nature of male sex work, it may be argued that this is more so related to sexual desirability and attraction, however this may also extend to others for whom the benefits of having sex with men are purely financial. Whilst there were no straight men who sell sex to men within the sample, the practitioners who took part had discussed their involvement with services. For these men, their engagement with these public

sex environments may initially be accidental and may become more purposeful when the potential for money making opportunities is realised. Angela, a practitioner from the North East discussed working with straight men who sell sex to men:

It's usually extremely opportunistic sometimes the survival sex. People may get approached or they approach people on the streets, but there's no set streets for that, or those zones for us here. And what we have got in terms of the men's is a lot of the cruising sites, we've got a few accessed by men and what happens there, sometimes people are there exchanging casual sex, sometimes people are there exchanging sex for survival needs, sometimes people are selling sex.

Angela (Practitioner)

For straight men who do not have sex with men, the gay cruising scene is likely not somewhere which they possess a great deal of knowledge of, or within which they socialise. Their motivation to be involved with the scene is often exclusively driven by their wider needs and their lack of resources, and as Angela describes, can begin with a chance encounter with somebody who is involved within the scene.

Although these spaces do provide opportunities to find transactional sex, such chance encounters are however, not limited to gay public sex scenes. William describes having met clients whilst out with female friends, and his description of the reaction he expected to his choice of dress suggests the absence of a gay social scene *per se* in his area:

We would all go out on this beat up town in (place name) and it was like, the guys must not have known what hit them. There was one guy, the two together, I'd be in drag like pedestrian drag like not even glamorous drag and just like pretending to really be a girl, even if the guy knew I think he loved it anyway. And me and my girlfriend would end up around the corner with him and the next thing we'd be walking off with 80 quid you know laughing and joking and pop into the offy having a great time.

William (Sex working participant)

Although not strictly limited to the gay social scene, it is clear from previous research, and the more common narrative within this research, that male sex work is more likely to manifest in the gay social scene than the straight. The historic persecution of male-male relationships

forcing men seeking same sex activity underground, the lingering societal prejudice against same sex relations and the formation of these spaces have contributed to creating a subculture and shared identity for men seeking sex with men (Norton, 2016). This has, in turn, facilitated spaces within which there is opportunity for both transactional and casual relationships to manifest, without the attention of those who may be less understanding of the identities within. The spaces described by Angela, Mason, Elliot and Kurtis are all reflective of this, with each of those spaces mostly hidden from the general public, operating within mainstream society but within spaces few outsiders access. Although this may be beneficial in terms of avoiding the judgement and stigmatisation of outside onlookers, operating underground, out of reach from the agencies who may be able to support them, male sex workers may potentially face increased vulnerability and risk of harm.

Whilst not all of the men in the sample discussed the use of cruising sites for more opportunistic transactional interactions, this study has mirrored previous work in that these spaces were accessed and utilised as an option by some of the men. Like female sex work, male sex work is not limited to occurring within a set space and is arguably even more fluid, adopting both mutual spaces more traditional to sex work and realms specific to men. For those aiming to provide support to male sex workers and protect them from harm, there may be some difficulty in identifying just where to focus their attention, because of this ambiguity of space. Indeed, interventions have often limited their focus on street and establishment-based sex work, though it is clear from the above that this focus may miss the mark by some way for male sex workers.

4.3 Inherently different?

Whilst there may be spaces that are shared between male and female sex workers, chapter 2 demonstrates how the idea of male participation in the sale of sexual services is often in conflict with popular ideas and understandings of sex work. The influence of feminist debates on the way in which sex work is understood has been profound, with men typically viewed as driving the demand for sex work (Walby, 2012). Although men do make up a minority of those selling sexual services, this wider understanding often does not reflect the complete reality. The participants in the interview reflected on these understandings, recognising within their narrative how wider society tends to overlook the male role in transactional sex. For example, Elliot describes the reaction of the ‘average numpty’, who is perhaps more representative of

wider societal perceptions than is acceptable, when he speaks of his work with male sex workers:

So I think a good way of looking at it is my most common response when I tell people what I do is 'oh yeah, I didn't know men did sex work', if you're just talking to, you know, your average numpty on the street, you know, and a lot of my mates have said it and I've been like, 'really? Have you really never thought about that?' Right? Yeah. And so, I think there's that people just really unwilling because it's not seen as something that goes on.

Elliot (Practitioner)

Within the sale of sex, the purchaser is typically perceived to hold the power within the transaction, with sex work presented as epitomising male dominance over women by influential radical feminist perspectives (Barry, 1995). For a man to assume this role most commonly reserved for women is contradictory of wider conceptions of their gender role. The position of the 'average numpty' in Joe's description may represent a person who is unwilling to acknowledge male sex work, rather than somebody who is blissfully unaware of their existence. If selling sex is to surrender the power within an interaction, then the behaviour is in contrast to expectations of the masculine identity (Dover, 1989). Male sex work then, is at odds with expectations of gender which are engrained deeply within societal constructs and functions, meaning that it may be a difficult topic to broach for some. The influence of these patterns of gendered expectation were reflected in the perspectives of those within the interview phase of this research:

It's just, it's just a core thing of society isn't it. You know, women, sex workers, women you know, prostitutes. The language around it, the attitudes around it, it's very, very different to how you know, what do you call a male sex worker? You don't have all these words, they're for women.

Louise (Practitioner)

I think classically you know, you think of sex workers as female. Either in a massage parlour or in a brothel or kerb crawling or on the street. I guess it's only in big cities that you would see male sex workers, rent boys you know one leg stood

lent against the wall, very fashionable backwards cap you know looking very cute and twinkly. There is quite a big difference I think, the guys would probably tend to do it more online, probably because of the nature of our society as well where guys feel more oppressed, you know mental health, they always have to feel like the 'man' you know. The breadwinner so they'd probably be a little more closed about it you know and have to do it in a different way.

William (Sex working participant)

Interestingly William picks up on a point around the visibility of male sex work, towards the end of this extract. He refers to how men may be more 'closed' about their sex work, operating in a different way to female sex workers. Given the use of gay social and public sex settings, this chapter has begun to make distinctions between how men and women differ in their approach to sex work. Examples of this throughout history have been discussed within this thesis, such as Molly House's (Norton, 1992), and the men themselves have highlighted the role that gay cinemas and other public sex environments have played in the facilitation of their work. If male sex work mostly takes place in these environments, then it is those who are privy to this culture already who are most likely to be exposed to it, and thus to wider society male sex work remains something of an enigma. The use of these settings, and the general idea that sex workers are more likely to be women, may contribute to the men who do sell sex being less visible to mainstream social actors, and therefore increasingly isolated from service provision and perhaps vulnerable to harm as a consequence. This nature may in turn impact the likelihood of a male sex worker embracing a sex work identity, as it is not forced upon them societally in the same way a female sex worker might experience, and men are therefore better able to negotiate the label and the stigma with which it is blighted. Although male sex workers may benefit somewhat from resisting this label and its associated stigma, the subsumption of male sex work within wider gay culture may contribute to the issue remaining to be excluded from debates on sex work and the responses set out to protect those involved.

Research has suggested that as a population, male sex workers have been comparatively hidden, though technology has increased their accessibility in more recent times (Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013). This, however, may only apply where they are *looked for*, and for the majority of society, male sex workers remain out of sight and out of mind:

I think there's a lot more visibility around the women doing it, I think also society is more accepting of women doing it than men. But also, I think with that it

becomes more of a thing where men need to be more discreet about what they are doing and how they are doing it. In this area I see the women on the streets constantly, I've seen one man on the streets that's it. So that type of thing, the street side of it is a lot more women dominated. But yeah, I think it comes back to society's view and society's unacceptance of it.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

There have been times where the attitude has been - you are a guy it's fine just do it. And that isn't healthy or right at all. Just because we are guys does not mean we lose all boundaries and self-respect. Also, everyone in society knows that women do this. But so many have no idea men are doing it every day in every town.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

Obviously, I would say there's more females doing it than males. And females maybe are more visible as in if you were to go down the areas where it's known where sex work takes place, I don't think you'd see many men there I think like it's much more behind closed doors, it's a need to know basis it's much more of an even tighter cohort of people to infiltrate even though with female sex work it's really hard.

Marcus (Practitioner)

Well, as I said, I did a little bit of research before you arrived here. I went on to Adultwork and there are 73 profiles at the moment of males offering sexual services within the (city name) area. And again, I was a little bit shocked at that, because that's the most I've seen of the men...I think the male sex work is a lot more hidden. Yeah. It's more secretive.

Police officer 1

Whilst the majority of society's understanding of female sex work may not come from their own experiences, or their own inquisition, there is a general level of understanding of female sex work. Although perhaps not a wholly accurate representation of female sex work, much of this understanding may come from its frequent representation within popular culture, with many films, novels, songs, television programmes and documentaries featuring female sex

work either as their focus or within the periphery of the story (Coy, Wakeling and Garner, 2011). Male sex work in contrast, is far less frequently represented, and where it is, is often depicted as an object of humour (Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigalo, for example). As such, society has had less exposure to the real-life issues faced by male sex workers, and therefore less chance to consider and understand the realities of those involved. Mason describes how his early understandings of the term 'prostitute' were shaped to apply to women only:

I think men are a lot more secretive, I don't know if that's just my opinion but like growing up I only seen for example the word prostitute, and that's a woman selling sex isn't it? I never knew that men actually did it. I met a few people, especially down the (public sex setting), they won't do anything with anyone without money.

Mason (Sex working participant)

Whilst there are valid reasons for male sex workers operating at the margins of society, often remaining hidden from outsiders, the lack of societal understanding is perhaps problematic. At times, this lack of exposure to male sex work may mean that its occurrence is less likely to be recognised, even by those working within a sex work space. Those who may have support needs that have been associated with some female street-based sex workers, such as substance misuse and homelessness, may escape the attention of service providers who are unfamiliar with the nuances of male sex work. This lack of recognition may go some way in compounding vulnerability and the risk of harm, with sex work specific services perhaps not appropriately capturing male sex work in their areas.

Louise, who was working mainly with female sex workers, had discussed how she had not recognised any male sex workers operating within her area, whilst also highlighting the visibility of the women in the area. Interestingly, she discusses how she felt male sex workers would present in a way which was different to her female clients:

I still don't think they look at male sex workers with the same contempt, they just don't, there's always some kind of, I wouldn't say it's more glamorised but there's a totally different attitude. And again, it could be because you don't physically see them on the street. And you know the women we've got on high street, and it is actually 100 per cent of them they're off their head on heroin, or whatever it is, they unfortunately do look a mess. You don't see men on the street looking like that. I

think society doesn't realise that what's happening behind the scenes actually, is still very similar.

Louise (Practitioner)

Whilst previous research has noted the substance use of certain sections of male sex workers (Davies and Feldman, 1999; Timpson *et al.*, 2007), some of the narratives presented within the interview phase of this research have highlighted how perhaps issues with substances are less likely than with women. Louise describes above how she feels that men do not present on the street in the way that female substance using sex workers may, and Yvonne discusses how the motivations for involvement in sex work often differed for the men in her project, when compared to the women who she had worked with:

Traditionally it's been the drug dependency of female sex workers, street-based sex workers I'm talking about here...So for them it was all about trying to get money for the drugs, and with male sex workers it wasn't. It was much more about coming out, tensions around sexuality, getting chucked out for LGBT identifying young men and for straight identifying men it was around prison leaving and care leaving. Homelessness through that route.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

Despite these observations the evidence does suggest that for some men, substance use is a driving factor for their sex work. Substances were discussed by two of the men interviewed, as were issues of homelessness and generally disorganised lifestyle. Yvonne herself later discussed the impact of substances on the men engaged with her service, suggesting that the more traditional expectations discussed above were shifting in more recent times. The relationship between sex workers, both male and female, and substances are nuanced and very much dependent on individual circumstances. The very idea that substances are an issue predominantly associated with female sex work may contribute to generalisations which suggest that male sex work is inherently safer than female sex work. Elliot suggests:

I would say that women arguably face more dangerous situations. Maybe that's just a relic of like, gender norms and things like that.

Elliot (Practitioner)

Whilst Elliot refers to gender norms here, rather than the impact of substances, he does differentiate between the levels of risk faced by male and female sex workers. Problematic gender norms may suggest that men are able to protect themselves in a way which women are not, contributing to the lack of recognition of the risk of harm faced by male sex workers. Indeed Altman (1999) suggests that male sex workers benefit from a mutual equality with their clients, which negotiates safety within the interaction. Interestingly, Kurtis highlights how he had a certain shared identity with his clients, who also assumed an outsider status because of their interest in sex with men:

Whoever the client is, there's a certain amount of shared outsider status between a client and a boy. You are both members of the (place name) gay community, you're both members of the history of gay (place name) and I think with some clients, there is a degree of shared identity that I can't imagine that you have in the same way if you are a female sex worker.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Whilst Kurtis did not go as far as saying that he felt this shared identity made sex work safer for him, he does again distinguish male sex work from female sex work. If having a shared identity is taken to mean that there is a level of equality between the sex worker and client, then this may go some way as to offering an explanation of Elliot's feeling that women face more dangerous situations as a result of their sex work. Police officer 2 provides further discussion on this point, highlighting how male sex workers presented the risks that they faced in previous research:

I'm guessing you've also then got power relationships, I think this is in the Bristol Nature and Prevalence research, identified from qualitative surveys of male sex workers that when they were identifying areas of risk to themselves they were more worried about risks from sexually transmitted disease than they were from violence and coercion and I guess that is because of a physical power relationship between a male sex worker and a male buyer versus the male client and female sex worker.

Police officer 2

Sex work by these assessments is seen by some as being safer for men, because the element of mutual equality and shared identity with their clients helps to level the playing field, in a way which female sex workers may not benefit from.

It is possible however, that Kurtis' narrative and feeling of shared identity is coloured by a degree of privilege. His status as bisexual, middle-class, educated and based within a brothel may facilitate a feeling of equality in a way which the gay, less educated or those with a more chaotic lifestyle in the study did not experience. Connell's (1987) theory of hegemonic masculinity would note that Kurtis, despite his sexual behaviour with men subordinating him from some levels of masculinity, would maintain a degree of masculine status in his other characteristics. Further to this, Kurtis' is the only interview participant, aside from Nathan, who discusses taking an active role in his sex work. The active partner in a male-male sexual interaction is considered to be dominant, and therefore retains in part the masculine gender role (Dover, 1989; Halperin, 1990). This, along with his characteristics which go some way in maintaining standards of masculinity, may help facilitate his feeling of shared status with his clients. None of the other participants highlighted such a feeling in the interview, and although this does not guarantee that they did not feel this within their transactional relationships, it is likely that Kurtis' narrative is quite individual. This, therefore, raises questions as to whether men are indeed safer within sex work interactions, or whether this is rather dependent on individual circumstances.

Indeed, despite many of the participants raising valid differences between theoretical and practical elements of male and female sex work, Rebecca importantly highlights that it is not just differences at a macro level that should be considered, with many of the differences being rather at an individual level:

I think there's differences between individual sex industry workers and I think, you know, there's always going to be differences. Even if you've got two male workers or two female workers, there can be vast differences there.

Rebecca (Practitioner)

Rebecca is quite right, in that all of the men who have taken part in this study have their own individual narrative. Whilst there are similarities between these narratives, no two are exact and these complexities should be recognised both in this research and the wider approach to supporting men engaged with the sex industry. It is important, however, to acknowledge the differences in the ways in which male sex work often manifests. Many of the men operate in a

way which is quite different to women, utilising spaces that are often specific to men who have sex with men and that escape the attention of the general public. With male sex work particularly hidden, and with the impact of gender roles and sex work stereotypes, it is far less recognised, and as a consequence, far less understood.

It is inevitable that male sex work will draw comparisons to female sex work, particularly given the relative wealth of knowledge of the latter. Naturally, there are biological differences between men and women, and society has constructed identities and roles based upon these biological differences. This does not mean however, that there cannot be shared characteristics between them, nor that the gender of an individual should dictate their experience. It is proposed that traditional notions of addiction and chaotic lifestyle or glamour and business enterprise are dependent on the individual rather than on their gender. Being male does not limit participation in the sex industry to any one sector, nor does it guarantee the adoption of a particular identity. The men who took part in this study were similar in some respects, and majorly different in others. Importantly, the narrative shared by the men was their own, their understanding of the world around them and their place within it. Understanding this individuality and difference within the population is as important as determining what is shared, to inform ongoing approaches to supporting those who may require it.

4.4 Stigma, work and negotiated identity

Within this chapter, I have outlined how the men directly involved, and those involved with support services represented within the practitioner's narratives, managed the perception of their identity in a number of ways similar to those presented by Goffman (1963). There were also a number of identity traits with which the men were negotiating, including the stigmatised identities described by Goffman, and also more foundational identity traits such as their interactions with masculinity. The findings of this work show how the men negotiate their sex working identities, highlighting how they managed the impression given of these identities at interview and also the significance that such a management process may have for their reporting behaviours and engagement with wider support.

The stigma associated with a sex work identity has been noted frequently within the existing literature (see Weitzer, 2018; Oselin, 2018; Orchard *et al.*, 2018; Sanders, 2016; Armstrong, 2019). A sex working identity has historically been associated with notions of sexual behaviour which digresses from normative standards, the enhanced risk of sexually transmitted disease and infections, loose morals and social deviance (see Coleman, 2014;

Weeks, 1991). For an individual involved in transactional sex, their behaviours may be interpreted by outside observers as being conducive to a sex working identity, meaning that for many involved, it is important that their sex working and personal lives are separated in a way which aims to avoid the impact of their work on their identity within personal interactions.

Hanks (2019:230), discusses how the female parlour-based participants in his study manage their sex working and personal identities, creating ‘non-sex working biographies’ for the benefit of those who they do not wish to disclose their sex work to. By presenting these alternate biographies, Hanks’ participants are able to negotiate how their identity is perceived by the outside observer and are therefore able to manage the impact of stigma related to their sex work by disassociating themselves with the activity, or at least minimising its significance to their lives. Similarly, several of the men who participated in this study were keen to discuss their wider activities and aspirations outside of a sex work context. Due to the context in which I had met the men, these discussions did not have the effect of masking their involvement in transactional sex completely, as Hanks’ participants alternate biographies may have done to the outside observer. The discussions put forward by the men instead managed their identities in that they demonstrated how sex work was something that they did, and was not necessarily the totality, or even perhaps the most significant aspect, of their identity. Their discussions of their working and social roles, perceived to be more legitimate, were in some way compensatory to their involvement in the stigmatised activity of sex work (Goffman, 1963).

Further to the men discussing their wider social roles, there were also discussions of their motivations for participating in transactional sex which went some way in negotiating the impression of their identity at interview. Hanks (2019: 231) discusses how for his participants, their involvement in sex work:

‘was framed as a temporary departure from ‘normality’ in response to ‘legitimate’ factors such as the need to pay for healthcare or support children. By drawing attention to their diverse identities and broad life histories, women sought to demonstrate that it would be overly reductionist to label them simply as sex workers.’

By reinforcing these wider social roles discussed above, and also referring to the temporal and need-based involvement in sex work, both the women involved with Hanks’ work and the men who took part in this study, are able to negotiate the impression projected of their sense of self. The men participating in this research drew attention to how, for them, sex work was resultant

of the circumstances and difficulties of their lives which were neither permanent nor reflective of how they perceived their longer-term pathway.

Within this chapter I have presented the narratives of three of the male participants in this study which reflect this, including Harrison, who was involved with sex work after becoming homeless, and its purpose was to help 'get life back on track'. For William, sex work was more about being unemployed, 'newly off the street' and the impact of the Universal Credit System on his financial capital. Similarly, Lorenzo had engaged in sex work when he was unemployed following migration to the UK, and he had suggested that when he secured a job, he would finish sex working. For these three men the impression that they give is that sex work is not a foundation of their identity in the same way that more permanent career roles may be perceived, being instead an activity which they are able to turn to should their wider lives require. By minimising the impression of the significance of sex work to their identity, the men may be better placed to navigate the stigma associated with their activities, therefore limiting its impact on their wider lives.

The above discussion of identities and their management is particularly relevant within a sociological field, however the way in which the men interacted with both a sex work and masculine identity does have vast implications for criminological thought. These management processes do indeed extend into how these men interact with the criminal justice system, and the wider authority of state actors. Importantly, for many of the men, their identities and practices sit within an intersection of a number of stigmatised identities. The 'prostitutes, drug addicts, homosexuals, alcoholics, and other shamed groups' (Goffman, 1963: 23) are reflected in some form within each of the men, whether this be through their sex working behaviours, their sexual preferences or interactions, their use of substances, issues associated with housing arrangements or a combination of these stigmatised characteristics.

Whilst the men managed their identities with me by employing the above-described tactics, with observers whom they are in contact with outside of the context created by this research, it is likely that both their sex work behaviours and their potential vulnerability go unspoken. Indeed, the stigma associated with sex work has been discussed within previous understandings as being a barrier to sex workers coming forward to report incidents (Lazarus *et al.*, 2012; Zhender *et al.*, 2019). Within the sample of men participating in this research, there is a clear acknowledgement of the impact of stigma and the environment within which their actions are understood. Indeed, the men live within a social context where, for a number of reasons, they may not be readily understood as the ideal victim of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours. Indeed, their status as men, and their involvement in sex work related

activities render them as potentially being perceived as less deserving of the appropriate responses than other groups may be (see Christie, 1986). This is something which the men clearly internalise, and must negotiate with as they navigate the world around them, their position within it and their interactions with the police and other agencies.

4.5 Chapter summary

As I have reiterated throughout, male sex work has mostly been of secondary concern within popular discussions of sex work, with female sex work being the predominant focus. Sex work is seen as something which women do, and this is reflected in the way in which the men involved in this study react to both the actions and identities associated with it.

Indeed, this chapter has presented and analysed the data emergent from this study as it relates to the men's perceptions of their own identity, a sex work identity and the ways in which they negotiated how their identity may be perceived. By discussing the perceptions of the men and those who work with them in relation to the theoretical concepts of stigma and identity, this chapter has added to the existing knowledge base around these issues which suggest the need for sex workers to manage outside perceptions of them and their work, because of the social status afforded to the transaction of sex and of those who participate in it.

Interestingly, some of the men had simultaneously rejected a sex work identity and internalised the stigmatisation of their behaviours. Several were keen to stress that sex work is not their job, nor is it their future, highlighting their other roles in a performance which distanced themselves from the sex work identity. Sex work for these men, is something that they do when their wider lifestyle requires, though they still discussed the stigma associated with sex work as they recognise links with their behaviours.

By extending these understandings this chapter sets a foundation for discussing how the men see themselves, their work and the ways in which they negotiate with and navigate the stigma associated with it. These discussions are important in beginning to explain how the men interact with the systems and structures in place to support them when they experience violence and otherwise harmful behaviour. The next chapter continues to build upon this understanding by identifying masculinity as it relates to the men's identity, and how this may influence their interactions with the world around them.

5 ‘Masc’ing vulnerability

This chapter is the second of the thematic chapters, and presents the findings of the research as they relate to the interrelationships between masculinity and vulnerability. Within the narratives of the men, practitioners and police involved, there were discussions around who may be expected to be vulnerable, what may prevent vulnerability and the broader influences of vulnerability on how an individual is perceived, or indeed how they expect to be perceived by others. This includes a discussion of how the men interacted with the label of vulnerability, and the negotiation of their masculine identity that this entailed.

I begin the chapter by engaging with theoretical understandings of masculinity which place masculine identities as existing within a hierarchy, before outlining the value placed on masculine characteristics and performances by those involved in the study. Following this, I raise a discussion of how masculinity is perceived as not being vulnerable, before putting forward a more nuanced consideration of the potential vulnerability faced by even those who exude normative masculinity. I position performances and negotiations of a masculine identity amongst perceptions of vulnerability, before suggesting that vulnerability manifests in both masculinity and femininity, though perhaps in unique ways. This poses a challenge to existing understandings and approaches to sex work which place female sex workers as inherently vulnerable, and do not recognise the potential vulnerabilities of men engaged in the sale of sex.

5.1 On hegemonic masculinity

Whilst research efforts which discuss the gender role of men and masculine identities have commonly done so in relation to inequalities between men and women, there has been a whole body of work which considers the diversity of masculine identities and the relationships between them. Carrigan, Connell and Lee outline the dominance or hegemony, of ‘white, educated, heterosexual, affluent males’ (1985:557). This character-type highlights the power ascribed to those of particular race, class, gender and sexual orientation, which importantly extends thinking around gender inequality to suggest that there are power differentials between men, as well as between men and women, which are legitimated by more than gender roles themselves.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity first introduced by Kessler and colleagues (1985) and later developed by Connell (1987; 1995; 2005) and Messerschmidt (2018; 2019), highlights the influence on specific power relations, of the behaviours and characteristics

perceived to be culturally dominant amongst men. Indeed, the theory of hegemonic masculinity is a critique of traditional thought around gender roles and patriarchy, which highlights that rather than being limited to expectations of gender role, theories of dominance and power should focus instead on the relationships between hegemonic masculinities, subordinate masculinities and femininity. Messerschmidt (2018) outlines how there cannot be a hegemonic masculinity without femininity or subordinated masculinities, as hegemony is constructed within interactions between identities. Therefore, neither hegemonic masculinity nor subordinated masculinity are fixed or specific to a particular set of characteristics, with the position of both reliant upon specific social interactions and contexts. Connell explains:

‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable.

(2005: 76)

This suggests that masculine identities which may be subordinated within one interaction, may be the dominant within another. Whilst there are given characteristics which have been credited as being masculine, there have been important suggestions throughout the formulation of this conceptual framework that for many men, absolute hegemonic masculinity is not achievable. Indeed, there is some difficulty in living to a standard which is ‘fluid, contingent, haphazard, provisional, and temporary’ (Messerschmidt, 2019:89).

Whilst gay men are proposed to sit ‘at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men’ (Connell, 2005: 78), straight men who demonstrate a variety of characteristics deemed to be feminine may also be subordinated by those who exert behaviour or characteristics deemed to be more masculine within a given interaction. By highlighting hegemonic and subordinate identities, the theory itself gives rise to an understanding of a hierarchy of masculine identities. However, if this standard is subject to change, and hegemonic masculinity is not something which is set once achieved, men are able to retain or negotiate their position within said hierarchy within their interactions with other men and women. This has potential implications for reporting and help-seeking behaviours, which themselves may threaten where an individual is positioned amongst said hierarchy.

Though many of the traditional understandings of what it means to be masculine are founded upon what it is an individual is supposed to be or represent, these very understandings often influence what people become. This chapter, therefore, documents the ways in which the men who took part in this study negotiate their masculine identities and how these wider social

understandings of masculinity impact their understanding of the world around them and their position within it. The concept of hegemonic masculinity offers an important theoretical underpinning to understanding how the men position and negotiate their own identity in relation to others.

5.2 Masculinity as a valued trait

If interactions between men and masculine identities are understood to exist within a hierarchy, it is to place a certain value on overtly masculine behaviours and characteristics. Masculinity as a valued trait was discussed by a number of participants within the study, whether this be related to the ability to protect one's own interest, being muscular or providing for a family. Kurtis, for example, discusses how a physically masculine presentation may be a marketable attribute for male sex workers:

What role do you think masculinity plays in understandings of male sex work?

Jordan (Researcher)

That's an interesting question. I would say that masculinity is a valued trait. There are things that make you marketable and those things are how young you are, the sort of shape you're in, penis size, nationality – English is more valuable or English speaking is considered attractive. Age, physical appearance like you know, face and I think there is a bunch of people who are attracted to you being masculine, because in the gay scene there is a bunch of people attracted to you being masculine.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Like Kurtis, Marcus discusses the masculine physical attributes which may make a male sex worker desirable to their clients. He uses the example of butlers in the buff, where the very nature of the work is for the individual to present stereotypically masculine visual traits:

I couldn't do butler in the buff being a skinny guy. You've got to be big, you need the big size, and you need a six pack, big arms. You need your shoulders being big, you need to look appealing to the clients.

Marcus (Practitioner)

Whilst Kurtis discusses how masculine traits may be deemed more attractive to some, Marcus highlights a particular role in which this level of physical appearance is expected almost universally. Whilst research focused on butlers in the buff is scarce, much can be learnt from the companies who are marketing their services. For example, 'Butlers in the Buff: The Male Order Company', which claims to be the world's first party butler company, describe their butlers as 'perfect for any occasion (or excuse) to get together with the girls'. Whilst this highlights their expectation that their clients will mainly be women, the page goes on to describe the men undertaking this role as 'toned, tanned and true gentlemen in every sense of the word'. The value of masculinity within this particular field of work is evident, with a particular image and presentation expected. Interestingly Nathan discusses how society, with its limited understanding of the issue, may assume this type of appearance to be more common amongst male sex workers in general:

If you were to ask the general public what a Male sex worker looks like, most would say a tall dark model with perfect 6 pack abs. They would assume the 'ideal' Male masculine physique. Whereas the opposite is true, I've worked with other guys on group bookings that have been your average early 40s guy...we don't all aspire to be perfectly masculine because no such thing exists anyway.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

Importantly, Nathan highlights the variance in masculine identities and how 'perfectly masculine' does not exist. Whilst there is a value placed upon masculine traits and characteristics in some circumstances, it may be that the real value of these physical traits is based more so on personal preference than an unnegotiable understanding of what is attractive. William raised this point within his interview:

I don't know it depends on the guy buying sex, I think if they're looking for somebody who is masc masc, but sometimes they're looking for somebody who is quite effeminate and quite submissive. It really depends what the buyer of sex is in to.

William (Sex working participant)

Although this section has focused primarily on the interview participants understanding of how masculine traits may be considered to hold a value related to physical attraction, there were wider discussions around how else masculine traits may in some way benefit those performing them. These benefits mainly centred around masculine independence and the ability to protect themselves, predominantly characterised by the societal expectation that masculinity and vulnerability are incompatible traits. The following sections discuss the dynamics of how the interview participants perceive masculinity and vulnerability, providing further insight into the value placed on masculine identities and performances.

5.3 Less masculine, more vulnerable?

As a concept, vulnerability and its use in understanding experience is subject to debate, particularly given the expansion of state measures of social control and involvement with particular groups defined as vulnerable (Brown, Ecclestone and Emmel, 2017). State policy and policing are particular areas which have seen an increasing focus on individuals and groups considered to be in need of increased levels of service, such as female sex workers (Carline, 2009). Importantly, the way in which vulnerability is defined is often exclusive, maintaining a focus on groups such as women who sell sex.

The College of Policing (2020) states that ‘a person is vulnerable if, as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care of or protect themselves or others from harm or exploitation’. This conceptualises vulnerability as the risk of an individual facing harm, which is in line with the general conceptualisation of vulnerability in sex work related research as the risk of sex workers facing violence (Brown and Sanders, 2017).

Both the inability to protect oneself from violence, and a dependence on others to do so on one’s behalf is contrary to the expectations of male behaviour and presentation within gender role theories, with male and masculine identities typically associated with strength, independence and dominance (Brannon, 2011). This has meant far less labelling of male bodies as being potentially vulnerable at a policy level, and less recognition of their potential exposure to harm socially:

I think in society in large, there is still a propensity to believe that men are less vulnerable than women in their sexual interactions. And there is still a hanging on to the older views around masculinity of ‘a masculine male is one who portrays

themselves as less vulnerable and therefore you denude yourself of your masculinity by showing that vulnerability’.

Police officer 2

Men are not seen as victims in the sex industry. And even at the lower street level where men are exploited and trafficked it is hidden and not talked about. Society won’t let men be victims especially in sex work.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

They don’t, they just see the females being vulnerable. It’s just trying to break down that barrier. The same as the situations with a female getting beaten from a male and a male getting beaten by a female, it’s become much more known about now, but it’s not known in areas like sex work. They do get battered whether it’s from another male or another female, there is still a big issue there with it.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

Whilst both Nathan and Ryan highlight here how socially, female vulnerability is far more readily recognised and accepted, they do recognise that men face similar patterns of victimisation within the sex industry. As discussed within chapter 2, state responses that focus primarily on women as victims and men as perpetrators fall short of recognising the nuance of both masculine and feminine identities. These same responses continue to obscure the potential adversity faced by male sex workers, and maintain the notion that female sex workers are in need of specific state attention to ensure their safety (see Brown and Sanders, 2017).

Though social and policy focused expectations of masculinity continue to present men as capable of protecting their own interests, it may be suggested that those who present more subordinated masculinities are seen as being less able to do so (see Ellis, 2017; Javaid, 2019). This was reflected within the narrative of Marcus, for example, who described his work with service attending men and the intersection between their masculinity and vulnerability:

Thinking about your interactions with the lads you mentioned, how would you describe the relationship between masculinity and vulnerability?

Jordan (Researcher)

Oh, that's a good one. I think again, based on just the two individuals that I know about, and their sexuality and their masculinity, they didn't have much masculinity, they had quite feminine characteristics which led to them being easily exploited and then put in a really vulnerable position.

Marcus (Practitioner)

It is clear that to some degree Marcus has internalised this wider societal notion that masculinity and vulnerability are incompatible characteristics. Whilst he did not know the personal sexual preference of these men, he did know that they were transacting sex with male clients. With one of the primary characteristics of masculinity presented by Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) being heterosexuality, gay men and men who have sex with men are therefore seen to be less masculine or perhaps more feminine. Marcus had highlighted how he felt that these men engaged with his service had displayed feminine characteristics and as a result, were more vulnerable, therefore suggesting a link between feminine characteristics and vulnerability.

These essentialist understandings of vulnerability were, to some degree, reflected in the experiences of the men who took part in the interview phase of this work. Out of the 7 interview participants of the second phase, 3 of the men discussed their experiences of harmful behaviours which under normative assessments of harm (see chapter 6), may have been considered as particularly significant. Interestingly, all 3 presented subordinated forms of masculinity which were very much in contrast with the accepted or idealised standard:

I think because you're told that men are supposed to be strong, but me I'm so feminine. Well not feminine, I'm just me.

Like clothes and stuff because obviously I dress up. I don't like calling it dress up, because like I said before I have two names, I go by (male name) or (female name), and most of the people are booking (female name).

Mason (Sex working participant)

For example, in my case, I dress up like a woman. My punters they are straight. They are married, with girlfriends. They are looking for... how do I say it... cock. They need a man dressed like a woman; I don't know why; I am not a psychologist. But they want to have a good cock, so if they pay for it and if he is nice, let's do it.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

What role do you think masculinity plays in the way in which we understand male sex work?

Jordan (Researcher)

In my case, I can't use this role. My case is strange, as a man, as a transvestite. So, in my case you have to be an actor. If you are masculine, they do not like it. So, you have to be an actor.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

I mean I love wearing high heels, high heel ankle boots are something I enjoy, but if I wear them out people look. I don't let that stop me, I've walked through the shopping centre in my heels on a Sunday morning. People stop and look, well bad luck. I feel comfortable in heels, so I am wearing heels. So, I think society in all things has this big divide into masculine and feminine.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

Whilst these men were not the only participants to demonstrate femininity or subordinated masculinity, their presentation in working interactions or choice of dress meant that their femininity was particularly enhanced. Kurtis similarly suggested that in his experience, it was only the more feminine figures who experienced some form of vulnerability:

The only other people who I ever heard of having problems with violence or having their boundaries pushed and stuff like that were either more boyish or more femme figures.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Kurtis later referred to an incident which occurred on the premises in which he had previously worked, highlighting how the individual who had been victimised was living in the U.K but was originally from Spain:

And, also somebody with like, limited English trying to go into that process. The guy it happened to (the incident of rape) was Spanish, he was there legally but had limited

English. He didn't want to do anything about it in the end... You can see the context there and what would make that so difficult to go ahead and report.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

What is interesting about this incident is that the individual shares his immigration status with two of the three men who discussed their own victimisation within the interview phase. Although being British is not an inherently masculine characteristic in itself, the 'white, educated, heterosexual, affluent male' presented by Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985: 577) is a position of privilege which may be particularly unachievable for many migrants. The combination of their feminine traits and their immigration status may have impacted somewhat on their standing within the wider social hierarchy, as well as any hierarchies related to sex work or masculine identities. Indeed, Bowen (2018) suggests that the sex workers in their study had understood there to be a 'whorearchy' of sex working identities related to the 'Britishness' of individual workers, therefore suggesting that these men may have held subordinated positions within said hierarchy of sex work identities. Whilst this is not to say that the men were victimised because of their immigration status, or their relative femininity, these characteristics may have worked to compound their vulnerability by othering them amongst this perceived hierarchy, contributing to the conditions which facilitated their victimisation.

It is clear that the expectations of the relationship between femininity and vulnerability are reflected in both the perceptions and experiences of victimisation discussed by the men within this study. Although this may not be evidence enough to go as far as concluding that femininity is inherently more vulnerable than masculinity, the experiences of the men within this study and the perceptions of their peers suggest a relationship between feminine characteristics and vulnerability which is quite different to that with masculinity. Masculine identities may be under some circumstances be vulnerable, though it seems that this is more likely where feminine characteristics are more prominent.

5.4 More masculine, still vulnerable?

Drawing on ideas of a universal vulnerability, there is a suggestion that being vulnerable is dependent on 'personal, economic, social and cultural circumstances within which all individuals find themselves at different points in their lives' (Brown, 2011: 317). Whilst there was a degree of consensus that safety concerns and vulnerability were linked more closely with feminised identities, some of the participants were keen to stress that all men have the potential

to be vulnerable. There is some indication of this idea within the organisational definition of vulnerability for policing, with the College of Policing (2017) highlighting how it is a combination of personal and situational factors which increase the risk of harm to an individual. Whilst the focus here is partly on essentialist notions of inherently vulnerable characteristics, as has arguably been the case with understandings of female sex workers as a vulnerable group, there is an acknowledgement that vulnerability is often contextualised within specific circumstances. Indeed, whilst an individual's personal characteristics may be in contrast to what has typically been defined as a vulnerable identity, they may find themselves in a situation which increases their vulnerability exponentially. Threats to male safety and their potential vulnerability may not be in keeping with the masculine gender role outlined earlier in this chapter, though anybody can become vulnerable, as a number of participants were keen to stress:

You know, I don't think stereotypically, I think you'd say that if you're masculine, you wouldn't be vulnerable. But I think that anybody can be vulnerable. For want of a better word. If you look closely at anybody, you'd see a vulnerability.

Marcus (Practitioner)

Well, vulnerability, could be anybody at any time really. You know, I'm not, I don't feel vulnerable at this moment in time. However, give me a couple of pints, I'm vulnerable.

Police officer 1

I think its morphing. If you went back 20/30/40 years, you would have had a much stronger stereotype of 'men are dominant, powerful figures who therefore couldn't be subject to abuse from women. Domestic abuse is a man beating a woman, not the other way around'. The experience across the UK, not just in sex work but more widely, indicates that is just simply not the case. It's a two-way relationship. In terms of vulnerability, both men and women can be vulnerable at different points of their lives.

Police officer 2

I would put money on most people assuming gay sex workers are more vulnerable to abuse and criminality. Male straight sex workers will not appear to be that vulnerable, but they are. We go places we've never been with people we don't

know...it's not normal in that respect. In the same way female on Male domestic violence is not overly recognised...violence to Male sex workers is not acknowledged. I know guys that have been in pretty bad situations...rare but it does happen.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

It is notable that Nathan highlights how vulnerability is not exclusive to those who may be deemed less masculine. Important to acknowledge within Nathan's narrative is his conformity with many masculine norms. As a straight male sex worker, working exclusively with women and couples, he maintains many of the masculine characteristics expected of him. Importantly, he discusses his knowledge of the potential vulnerability of others, giving no indication of his own vulnerability. What he does recognise, is the potential situational factors which may increase his vulnerability. Although his personal characteristics, and those expected of men more generally, may mean that they are seen to be less vulnerable than women, enforcing this idea may have huge implications for men who do become victimised:

So quite often, there's that perception that because they're a man they can't be a victim of crime, and there's no vulnerability. So, they kind of face that double stigma. So, the stigma around the sex work they do. And then the stigma around the fact that they're a man and they're suddenly wanting support or need our help as a victim of crime.

Rebecca (Practitioner)

Whilst expectations of men and masculine standards are clearly reflected in the way in which the men involved in this work see vulnerability as being conceptualised socially, the participants raise important points on the potential vulnerability faced by an individual regardless of their masculine or feminine characteristics. A shift towards acknowledging this potential has vast implications for enabling men to report their experiences of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours. Indeed, a man who is victimised faces not only the impact of the action in itself, but also the aftermath of dealing with having become victimised and requiring the support of others (Stanko and Hobdell, 1993). For a man, this means coming to terms with having in some way digressed from masculine standards and what is expected of them. Whilst vulnerability is socialised as being in conflict with a masculine identity,

victimisation and support-seeking will continue to pose a threat to the position of men, and therefore remain something with which they must negotiate.

5.5 I'm not vulnerable, but I'll tell you who is

The difficulty in shifting attitudes towards male potential vulnerability, is that the expectations of what it means to be a man are reinforced from an individual's formative years and throughout their lives (Cranny-Francis, *et al.*, 2003). For a man to display vulnerability, is for them to step outside of this socialisation of their gender role (McCreary, Saucier and Courtenay, 2005) and therefore to concede in part their masculinity and their position within the hierarchy of masculinities. Men, therefore, must navigate their interactions with others in a way which protects the impression of their ability to protect their interests, in relation to the ability of others.

A number of the men involved with this study attempted to manage their masculine identities in a way similar to how they managed their sex working identities. By identifying those perceived to be more vulnerable than themselves in discussions about safety, the men were able to both reduce the focus on their own vulnerability and highlight how they were better able to maintain masculine standards than others were. Kurtis, for example, is a bisexual, middle class and educated man who sold sex in a brothel environment. He describes how he could present himself as masculine, and that this was almost a protective factor in his case. He highlights how it was the more feminine or younger men with whom he worked, who were more likely to face harmful behaviour in the course of their work:

I wouldn't ever say I was straight acting as I don't like the term, but I guess I could present as masculine. There were people for whom that was a valuable attribute, much more so than being camp. And I think that if you presented as masculine, mannish rather than boyish in particular people tended to not kind of... The only other people who I ever heard of having problems with violence or having their boundaries pushed and stuff like that were either more boyish or more femme figures. More twinkly, in a sense of looking like a teen boy.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Although Kurtis himself presents a number of characteristics which are valued as masculine traits, including his class, education and race, his bisexuality and participation in sex work

subordinate him from more hegemonic masculinities. Importantly, Kurtis claims that he can present as masculine, and this therefore meant that he did not face the same kind of issues which those who presented as more feminine did. Kurtis manages his identity not only through his performance of masculinity within his sex work interactions, but also in his discussion with me where he presents those less masculine than him as being more vulnerable. Kurtis was not alone in doing this, with Mason also giving an example of an individual who may possess less masculine characteristics than himself when discussing the vulnerability of men. Mason himself presents a masculine identity further subordinated than Kurtis, with him being gay and dressing as a female whilst sex working, and he must search further down the hierarchy of masculinities to find an example subordinate to himself:

What sorts of issues do you think that men who are sex working face quite regularly? Or are there any?

Jordan (Researcher)

I think there are a lot of issues, especially kind of drugs, drink and really like vulnerability which I never kinda seen, I never seen myself as a vulnerable person but it was just two weeks ago I met a young guy down (place name) and you know he was doing things, in a very vulnerable kind of way.

Mason (Sex working participant)

So you saw the young guy as being vulnerable?

Jordan (Researcher)

I actually rang the police because I couldn't get on ugly mugs. I just rang the police and told the police look there's a guy down here and there's an older man that was following him everywhere.

Mason (Sex working participant)

Interestingly, Mason says he had not recognised his own vulnerabilities despite describing multiple situations within which he was extremely vulnerable at interview. It is interesting then, how he was quick to recognise the vulnerability of the 'young guy' in question, and how he responded to this vulnerability so readily. Young people are generally considered to be more vulnerable because of their relative immaturity (Bracken-Roche *et al.*, 2017), and boys are

considered to be less masculine than men, displaying more feminine characteristics in their years of development (Mosse, 1998). With Mason himself demonstrating a number of traits which render his masculinity sub-ordinate, it may be suggested that it is difficult for him to find an adult masculine identity which he perceives as more vulnerable than his own, therefore his perception of a vulnerable male was limited to this age-based analysis.

William faced a similar difficulty to identify vulnerable masculinities, when asked about the issue of safety for male sex workers:

How big of an issue do you think safety is for men who sell sex?

Jordan (Researcher)

Oh god anybody who sells sex I think it is a massive issue. It is really worrying, I've got a lot of friends from being on the streets here in (place name), it breaks my heart to think about those girls, they are on one. They have a heroin habit. I use, I use heavily, I go up and down with it, but I've never got myself a habit, luckily. Touch wood. You know what happens to sex workers out there on the streets, they usually die. It's a real thing. I'm invested in this girl; I know this girl and we sort of looked out for each other in weird ways or just hung out and had a great time and now I'm thinking I don't want to go out doing that. She's just going out and catching guys on kerbs you know, and she's got a new area now, she's got a new guy looking after her and it's just like oh god, one day I'm just never going to see her again.

William (Sex working participant)

William is gay, performs his gender whilst working and discusses his use of hard substances. Like Mason, there is much about him which could potentially make him vulnerable, though he is very quick to relate this discussion about the issue of safety back to the female sex workers he knows. Again, with William's masculine characteristics it may be difficult for him to identify a masculine identity which is subordinate. His identification of feminine vulnerability here can be interpreted as both his internalisation of the masculine and feminine gender roles and expectations, and his management of his own masculine identity as less vulnerable.

Berg (2021:139) suggests that their male participants had also situated vulnerability "over there", despite their own struggles with issues which may potentially cause them harm. The men within that particular study, focused on the sexual vulnerability of women, though

this does bear similarity to the discussions of the men within this study above. What the men in my study present is an example of the hierarchical masculinity presented by Connell (1987) whereby they both recognise their own position within the hierarchy and attempt to manage this in relation to the position of others. As men, irrespective of their own position within the hierarchy, they are able to identify an identity which is subordinate to their own through virtue of its lack of masculinity or femininity. By doing so, the men are able to retain dominance over those they see as being more feminine, and to reject the vulnerable identity which may threaten their position within the hierarchy.

5.6 Protective masculinities

Butler (1988) discusses how gender identity is built over time through performance, constructed by an individual's actions and their presentation. Whilst performing their gender identity within the course of their work, Mason, William and Lorenzo all present visually and behave in a manner which would typically be construed as feminine. Although none of these men identify their gender identity as female, whilst they are performing this identity they in some ways embody the female gender role. Neither violence nor physical confrontation are typically associated with femininity, with men more commonly perpetrating violence (Lunneblad and Johansson, 2019). In an interesting demonstration of how the men perceived the limitations of their performed gender role, these men discussed how they were able to revert to their more masculine selves when they needed to defend themselves. Lorenzo and Mason provide examples of where they strip away their outwardly feminine characteristics and revert somewhat to their more masculine self and defend themselves:

If he's crazy, then you have to be crazy too. Sometimes when I have a problem with a punter because he thinks I am a woman I take off my wig and say I am a man like you, are you crazy. Let's go to the police and your family will know that you sucked my dick. You have to be an actor, I'm not aggressive I don't like violence but if he becomes violent, I know how to do it. 'Really do you think I am a woman? Look at me! I'm a fucking man like you'.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

In a way I always feel like it's my fault and you know; I was selling sex or dancing and I'd get hit or something from that. Don't get me wrong I'd pull off my wig and smack him back, but I do feel like it is my own fault.

Mason (Sex working participant)

By taking off their wigs, both men strip away one the props which contribute to their performance as their feminine self, in what is a symbolic return to their masculine self. It is evident that these men, whilst presenting as more feminine, feel less able to protect themselves. As they return to their masculine selves the violent action of protecting themselves or returning the aggression shown to them is more in keeping with the role that they are performing.

Kurtis, who had earlier suggested that it was the more feminine figures who he recognised as having issues with clients, suggested that the more masculine men did not have the same issues:

I very rarely, maybe in the beginning of my career, got perceived as a boy in that way. Like I did, and I did BDSM stuff with clients where I took a submissive role and that type of stuff, but I never felt like anybody was ever pushing my boundaries because they were a big man and I was a skinny teen. I think periodically that happened to people, not very often but it did happen. So, I think masculinity is like a safeguard in sex work, as far as I can make out. And I would say that from my other experience of similar types of boys that would be true for them.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

What Kurtis suggests within this extract and his earlier comments, is that being masculine or presenting masculine characteristics meant that he, and other men, were less likely to experience the harmful behaviour of others. Importantly, his discussion of how masculinity may be protective is focused more so on the prevention of these behaviours, whereas Lorenzo and Mason discuss the protective qualities of returning to their more masculine identities in response to an incident. It is possible that the latter two are more expectant of this sort of behaviour whilst performing their gender in this way, appreciative of the vulnerability which has been recognised as associated with femininity within the sample. What is clear from both perspectives is that each of the men felt better able to protect themselves when they were actively performing or presenting in a way which was masculine, suggesting that to them, masculinity is a protective factor.

5.7 Vulnerable masculinities

Throughout this chapter I have discussed how more feminine identities have typically been perceived as being more vulnerable than masculine, and how the socialisation of gender roles has meant that men are expected to behave in certain ways. There has however, been some suggestion that masculinity is not invulnerable, in recognition of both the situational factors which can contribute to the vulnerability of an individual and the complexity of masculine identities. Whilst masculinity has been presented above as being in some ways protective, the expectations of men and male conformity to them may also work to increase the vulnerability of some, rather than preventing it. Clowes (2013) details some of the ways in which gender and performances of masculinity can lead to men facing harm, including their likelihood of engaging in unprotected sex, their reluctance to seek early help for medical issues and the lure of performance enhancing drugs such as steroids to maintain body image standards. The idea that the pursuit of a visually masculine body image may in some way create vulnerability can also be seen within Marcus' narrative. With a masculine ideal comes a way in which men are expected to look, and often this look is difficult to maintain. The pressure of maintaining these standards may have vast mental health implications, as has been seen in studies of body image (see for example Montgomery-Sklar, 2017), and can also impact on physical health, with the use of performance-enhancing drugs synonymous with maintaining a muscular physique:

With stereotypically what we would see as masculinity like strong and proud man, big, you know, appearance is professional. And you know, just try to think of the pressure that man is under to keep that up. You know image like with performance enhancing drugs, massive issue. And when does that stop? And the complications that come into that or, if you look at male sex work and say a butler in the buff. You know, I couldn't do butler in the buff being a skinny guy. You've got to be big, you need the big size, and you need a six pack, big arms. You need your shoulders being big, you need to look appealing to the clients. But then you're under pressure to do that. You have to train, you have to get in shape, you have to eat, you have to spend money on your appearance.

Marcus (Practitioner)

Importantly, Marcus begins this extract with some indication of what he perceives as stereotypically masculine characteristics, highlighting strength and pride. Independence has been highlighted earlier in this chapter as another stereotypically masculine characteristic, and a combination of these three traits may leave men less likely than women to seek support for their physical or emotional needs. Addis and Mahalik (2003) discuss how the socialisation of the masculine identity has a profound impact on the likelihood of men seeking help, with the act of seeking help in contrast with this role. Marcus continued by discussing men seeking help both in general and health contexts:

Men are just stubborn like that as a trait is a masculine trait. Men are just stubborn, and they'll, you know, it's like, if you get lost, 'no, we're not asking for directions, I will find a way'

I think that's the thing with men in general though, it's like, if things go wrong to men, how long it will be before they seek help? They'll bury their head in the sand, they'll be like, 'no, I can deal with it. I can deal with it'. Maybe go back to that masculinity and not want to lose face not want to lose pride. 'I am a man I can sort it; I can deal with anything'.

But men don't do it. And it's like Lance Armstrong, the famous example where he just ignored things. He was coughing up blood, one of his testicles had swollen, abdominal pain, all these warning signs but he just ignored it, and then he was riddled with testicular cancer, abdominal, lung, brain. If he had gone the first time, he probably would have caught it a little bit sooner. So, I think that's just a masculine, stubborn bloke thing. Women are more like, 'oh got to get that sorted.'

Marcus (Practitioner)

What is presented by Marcus is a complete reluctance of men to engage with support unless absolutely necessary, maintaining an image of self-reliance and therefore a masculine identity. Louise discussed a similar difficulty in engaging men with support services, highlighting how there is a conflict between the masculine and vulnerable identities for a man seeking support:

But in a sense that must be more difficult, because masculinity isn't in itself vulnerable is it? Whereas women are portrayed almost as these weak little

vulnerable women, and men aren't. So how do you come to terms with, 'I'm supposed to be being this strong masculine guy, but actually, I'm not. I'm vulnerable, God knows what's going on in my head'? I think there's a different ball game to be had, with, you know, masculinity and femininity. In a way, it's easier to deal with the women.

Louise (Practitioner)

Whilst this reluctance to seek support may apply to men more broadly, there are perhaps factors which make some men increasingly unlikely to seek support. If seeking support presents a threat to the masculine identity of an individual, then any further threat to this identity may mean that men are increasingly unlikely to reveal their need for help. Angela describes working with straight men who are reluctant to seek support because their transactional behaviours digress from the heteronormative masculine ideal:

How would you describe the relationship between masculinity and vulnerability?

Jordan (Researcher)

I think that's a huge question. Because I guess, one prevents, I think, for some of the heterosexual men selling gay sex it's because of masculinity and stereotypes that probably puts them in a more vulnerable position by not disclosing and getting support.

Angela (Practitioner)

What all three of these practitioners recognise is that a masculine identity, and the efforts to maintain the idealised traits with which it is associated, has the potential to contribute to the increased vulnerability of some men. The pursuit and maintenance of a masculine identity arguably encourages behaviours which both increase the risk of harm and prevent access to the support which may mitigate it. Though, what also became clear from the research was that the difficulty engaging men is not limited to getting them through the door, but continues within any subsequent interaction. Elliot discusses how the men engaged with his service at times revealed serious abuse or otherwise adverse experiences, though he notes the difficulties in supporting the men to address this, caused by their reluctance to delve into the matters:

So, I think we've got a few service users who kind of present as big men, you know. Who might present this big man for five or 10 meetings, and then will present some kind of vulnerability or some kind of 'actually my life's shit'. You also get people who will tell you in the first 10 minutes about all of these awful things that happened to them but will brush it off. You know? Yeah, be like, 'it's fine. I was sexually abused as a child. It's fine'. That's it. 'Yeah, I'm a care leaver it's all good', you know, and so they will and bring about a lot of adverse experiences. Or like circumstances or characteristics that every single professional working with them, every single question would be around this screams vulnerability. Whatever vulnerable means. But they wouldn't necessarily go yeah, I'm vulnerable because of that, they would just be like 'yeah, I have dealt with it. Can we talk about my housing now?' You know, or 'can we talk about my benefits now?'

Elliot (Practitioner)

Whilst within Elliot's narrative the men are involved with support services and have disclosed their experiences, he suggests that the men minimise these experiences and wish to receive more standard support for issues such as housing or benefits. Stanko and Hobdell (1993) note how a victim is viewed as 'weak and helpless' and that male victims may use tactics such as avoidance, humour and the minimisation of their victimisation to deal with their experiences. For the men within Elliot's narrative to dismiss their need for support in relation to their victimisation is to minimise the significance of their experience. Whilst the experience itself may pose a threat to their masculine identity, their subsequent response, dealing with the incident independently, may be considered as more in line with the traditional expectations of men. What is evident here, like in many of the interview interactions, is the negotiation of their position within the hierarchy of masculine identities, performing in a way which is intended to influence how they are perceived by others.

It has been clear from the way in which the men have navigated conversations about vulnerability that it may be difficult for them to accept that they themselves may be at risk within a given context. Noteworthy about this section and the narratives presented within it, is that all of the extracts which have discussed vulnerable masculine identities have been taken from interviews with practitioners, rather than from those with the men themselves. Whilst some of the men involved in the study did recognise the potential for male vulnerability, these discussions were mainly around specific vulnerabilities or identities which were less masculine than their own. What this suggests is that these men, for the most part, have internalised the

ideas of masculine expectations and embody this within the performance of their identities. The issue is, efforts to maintain this masculine ideal may in some way increase the vulnerability of men, raising a barrier to them seeking support and influencing their behaviours.

5.8 Problematic masculinities

Whilst victimhood and vulnerability are not normatively associated with men or the masculine role, violence and aggression are considered to be ‘means of claiming or defending privilege, asserting superiority or taking an advantage’ (Connell, 2002: 95). If more masculine identities are to remain dominant over less masculine and feminine identities, then violence and aggression are behaviours which become affiliated with masculinity in a way which limits the perception of men as victims themselves. Even in cases where men are themselves victimised, this research has uncovered a response whereby violence is adopted in return. In Mason’s case for example, he suggests that he would remove his wig and strike the individual back, in an act which asserts his own masculinity and defends his position within the hierarchical structure. It is clear that in some ways the men within this study had internalised violence and aggression as inherently masculine characteristics, and as a result were less open to discussions of male victimhood. Kurtis, for example, quite rightly highlights the prevalence of violence against women, but presents a utopic vision of the dominance of men over other men:

I think that there isn’t a desire to do violence to rent boys like there is prostitutes. I think the way we think about heterosexuality is intrinsically quite violent and dominant, and that’s a much smaller part of homosexuality. And consequently, I think gay men combine violent and sexual thoughts far less than straight men. Because of misogyny inherent in our society. I’m not saying it doesn’t happen because I’ve given you an example of somebody who it did happen to, but I think misogyny is so prevalent in our society and misogyny is so prevalent in heterosexual pornography and I think that it is very easy, not that that is the cause of it but like, I think male heterosexuality and violence are much more closely linked than gay male sexuality and violence.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Whilst it may well be true that ‘gay men combine violent and sexual thoughts far less than straight men’, Kurtis’ analysis falls short of recognising that violence against sex workers is

often perpetrated by those who never intended to engage in a sexual transaction with them in the first place. Deering and colleagues (2014) discuss violence against sex workers committed by other groups, such as members of the public, the police and other sex workers. The previous literature outlined in chapter 2 demonstrates how the clients of sex workers have quite often been identified as the problem, with much of the policy relating to sex work in England and Wales structured to target the demand for sex work (Sagar and Jones, 2014).

If men are assumed to be both almost exclusively the clients of sex workers (Brooks-Gordon, 2010), and the main perpetrators of violence (Helman and Ratele, 2018), then their perceived role within both sex work and the perpetration of violence is limited to this problematic identity rather than one which requires external support. Rebecca highlights this, and the potential impact that such an understanding of masculinity can have on both male and female sex workers:

So, like to talk about funding, there is a lot of funding for violence against women and girls. And my perspective on this, ‘violence against women and all women are vulnerable’ is a real strong message to perpetrators. Perpetrators target vulnerability, the state, the government, are saying all women are vulnerable, sending this really strong message out... what we're challenging is this really strong message from the Government and the state that masculinity is a thing that creates violence and masculinity is about violence, when actually, masculinity probably means different things to different people...It's down to the individual, but I do think that the government promote this whole masculine violence agenda. And this vulnerability, female agenda. And yeah, that's quite damaging.

Rebecca (Practitioner)

Although violence may well be utilised as a tactic to assert dominance within an interaction, any suggestion that masculinity and violence are linked inextricably presents a potentially damaging narrative which undermines the potential for male vulnerability and facilitates an environment in which perpetrators may be further encouraged to victimise women. The consequence of such an approach, in Rebecca's estimation, is that it may heighten the vulnerability of both male and female sex workers.

5.9 Masculinity, femininity and vulnerability

What is clear from the data presented within this chapter, is that the ways in which male behaviour and identity are socially understood is shaped, largely, by understandings of masculinity. The impact of this on the ways in which the men identified elements of their own identity were clear, as were the implications for understandings of vulnerability and the risk of harm. This chapter contributes to an evidence base which has considered how interactions between men and social understandings of male needs are moulded by masculine identities, characteristics and performances.

The existing literature which has theorised around masculine and feminine identities has presented the social expectations of a masculine individual as being strong and resolute, dominant in a way which lessens the threat posed to their interests (see Lindsey, 2014; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, commentators such as Connell, Messerschmidt, Carrigan, Kessler and Lee have identified masculine identities as existing amongst a hierarchy, with interactions between men often framed by hegemonic and subordinate identities. Importantly within this understanding, masculine identities are outlined as being numerous, and indeed the men interviewed for this work present a variety of traits, characteristics and performances which may influence any impression of their masculinity.

Despite these differences, the narrative of the men did largely reflect a wider social reluctance to appreciate the potential vulnerability of men, perhaps owing to an internalisation of the above-mentioned expectations of male strength and independence, and also of the proscription of vulnerability to feminine and female identities within sex work related policy frameworks (see Brown and Sanders, 2017). Indeed, several of the men reflected on how male vulnerability within the sex industry goes largely unrecognised, in favour of a consistent focus on the risks presented to female sex workers. Vulnerability, therefore, was identified within the sample as being a characteristic which has fundamentally been associated with a feminised identity. This conflation of masculinity and invulnerability, and femininity and vulnerability, is problematic in a number of ways, especially where vulnerability is associated with ‘weakness and dependency’ (Gilson, 2016:71). Within this understanding of vulnerability, it becomes something with which men must contest in order to preserve the impression of their masculine identity and position within the social hierarchy, therefore influencing their interactions with people and systems.

This contest, and the proscription of a vulnerable identity to women, were evident within the interviews, with participants discussing those who presented with more subordinate

masculinities or outward femininity as being potentially vulnerable to violence or otherwise harmful behaviour. Marcus, for example, discussed working with men who had ‘feminine characteristics which led to them being easily exploited’, highlighting his particular belief that their femininity had impacted their vulnerability. Further commentary in this vein from Kurtis, highlighted how the more feminine presenting men were those he seen as being more likely to experience negative behaviours such as boundary pushing. Indeed, it was clear that discussions of vulnerability presented a challenge to the masculine identity of those involved, with the discussions simultaneously outlining the potential of male vulnerability despite mostly containing a rejection of personal vulnerability to harm.

Notably, some of the men were keen to discuss the vulnerability of others, rather than their own. Similar findings have been put forward by Berg (2021), who suggests that the men involved in her study had located vulnerability with female porn performers, rather than themselves. The men within this study, however, did not only highlight the vulnerability of women, but also discussed the vulnerability of those who had masculine or feminine identities which would be considered to be subordinate their own. For example, the most ‘typically’ masculine of the men involved in the study discussed the experiences of women, a bisexual man who described how he may be considered ‘straight acting’ discussed the experiences of more effeminate men and some of the most effeminate men involved identified instead the vulnerability of women and younger men or boys.

The influence of a policy landscape which places female sex workers (see Carline, 2009) and children (see Brown, 2011) as vulnerable groups is clear here. There are also clear applications for Connell’s (1987) idea that masculine identities sit within a hierarchy, with the men both recognising their own position within the structure of identities and also defending it through a management process which involves a comparison to more subordinate identities. By discussing vulnerability as relating to others, these men manage the perception of their own ability to protect themselves from harm by highlighting those less able, and therefore negotiate their own status within any hierarchy of masculine identities. This negotiation shows the men both internalising wider societal expectations of who may be vulnerable, and rejecting the idea that they may be vulnerable themselves.

As well as negotiating perceptions of their own vulnerability during discussions with me, there were some indications that masculine performances in a broader context were seen to help manage both perceived and actual vulnerability. Whilst physical attributes and sexual identities may contribute to the impression of masculinity discussed by the participants, there were also discussions within the sample of masculine performances, called upon where the

scenario required. Kurtis, for example, had discussed how he was able to present as masculine, implying that his doing so was self-protective. For those who were less able to perform masculinity in this way, there is a suggestion within Kurtis' narrative that they are, as a consequence, more vulnerable to the harmful actions of others. Interestingly, this chapter has also shown that two of the four men who had discussed a performed femininity had also referred to stripping away elements of their feminine presentation in order to then protect themselves from an imminent threat. These men had made symbolic comments about removing their wigs, both essential to their feminine performance and perhaps most easily accessible in the moment, and then behaving in ways which would be more conducive to protecting themselves from harm. This symbolic act represents both the individual feeling more able to protect themselves in their more masculine form, and also their assumption that their return to a more masculine embodiment would influence the power dynamic of the interaction. This finding is indicative of both the socially constructed gender stereotypes which note the dominance and control of men over women and subordinated masculine identities (Connell, 1987) and is also a demonstration of a performed gender identity in which the men were able to step in and out of (Butler, 1988).

Paradoxically, performances of masculinity were also highlighted as increasing vulnerability in some ways, however. Both Yvonne and Angela discuss supporting straight men selling sex to men, who therefore dissect the line between heteronormative identity and non-heteronormative behaviours. Within this discussion, there had been an indication that the masculine status of these men, and the conflict between this and their sex work behaviours, had rendered them more vulnerable to harm because they were reluctant to seek support. Here we see a reverse of the relationship between masculinity and vulnerability presented earlier, with attempts to manage their masculine status preventing these support seeking behaviours and therefore perhaps increasing their vulnerability. Whilst femininity has been the main focus of causing or increasing vulnerability throughout the policy narrative and that of the participants, attempts at performing masculinity may also drive vulnerability, though perhaps in a different way to what is understood about femininity.

Discussions of the masculine body image ideal further revealed this point, though here in the sense of physical health needs. What the findings of this study make clear is that masculinity does not fully prevent vulnerability, despite (for the most part) the participants within the study perceiving masculine presenting individuals to be more able to protect themselves from the behaviours of others. The perception of vulnerability where there is increased masculinity lies mainly instead within the behaviours of the individual themselves.

Within this analysis an outwardly masculine individual may be less at risk of experiencing the harmful behaviour of others, though they may face a degree of harm triggered by their attempts to manage their masculine status. Indeed, the value placed on masculinity increases the pressure to maintain these standards, which are often unrealistic. The findings of this work suggest that both this and maintaining the image of independence and strength by not seeking support, may only increase the vulnerability of men. Reinforcing or perpetuating the idea that masculinity is associated with an inherent invulnerability maintains the stigmatisation of male support seeking behaviours which in turn drives the perceived need for men to continue to manage and negotiate their masculine identity. The same systemic enforcement of the idea of inherent feminine vulnerability also sends a dangerous message to potential perpetrators of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours, related to the availability of potentially vulnerable individuals to target (see Elvey and McNeeley, 2018).

What is clear from this chapter is that social perceptions of masculinity, along with essentialist policy frameworks which identify women as being vulnerable, influence both how men are understood and the way in which men understand their own relationship with vulnerability. The findings presented within this chapter contribute to understandings of how interactions between men are shaped by masculine identities, and it is the performance of masculine traits which often determines whether or not an individual is recognised as being potentially vulnerable. Fineman (2008:23) discusses the concept of vulnerability and its marriage to identity within policy, in relation to measures aimed at addressing inequalities:

‘Equality must escape the boundaries that have been imposed upon it by a jurisprudence of identity and discrimination, and the politics that has grown up around this jurisprudence. The promise of equality must not be conditioned upon belonging to any identity category, nor should it be confined to only certain spaces and institutions, be they deemed public or private. Equality must be a universal resource, a radical guarantee that is a benefit for all. We must begin to think of the state's commitment to equality as one rooted in an understanding of vulnerability and dependency, recognizing that autonomy is not a naturally occurring characteristic of the human condition, but a product of social policy.’

Based on the findings of this work, it is important that the fluidity of both masculine identities and vulnerabilities are acknowledged, and approaches such as that to sex work are adapted to reflect this more changeable reality for men. If vulnerability is inherent to the human condition,

then it is applicable to the experiences of both men and women. In order to reflect this, state responses to sex work must be more open to the possibility of male involvement in sex work and the potential for male vulnerability, moving away from the ‘violence against women and girls’ approach which this study has earlier argued to be problematic for both male and female sex workers, to recognise that vulnerability itself is contingent on many factors outside of distinctions between masculine and feminine, with state policy and practice itself being central.

5.10 Chapter summary

Within this chapter, I have presented the findings of the research as they relate to the conceptualisation of masculinity and femininity, and their interrelationship with understandings of vulnerability.

By highlighting the specific challenges faced by men relating to masculine identities, this chapter contributes to addressing the third research question of this study, which seeks to identify how existing theoretical understandings of sex work are limited in understanding male experiences. The chapter demonstrates how existing gendered understandings of sex work and vulnerability have presented challenges to the masculine identities of male sex workers. The chapter also makes broader contributions to thought around the ways in which men negotiate their masculine identities, and thus their position within a social hierarchy, by rejecting notions of vulnerability which they, and policy within this area, typically ascribe to female and feminine identities.

Whilst masculine identities themselves were largely considered to be less vulnerable within the sample, the performance and maintenance of a masculine identity was noted as being something which has the potential to increase the risk of harm. This was discussed in relation to the use of performance enhancing drugs for example, and the reluctance to seek support fuelled by maintaining stoic masculine stereotypes. Related to this, I have made distinctions within this chapter between vulnerability to the interpersonal harms perpetrated by others, and vulnerability relating to these performances.

By drawing on theories of vulnerability, this chapter concluded by suggesting a need for policy-based solutions to supporting sex workers to recognise the potential vulnerability to the risk of harm of both male and female sex workers. In the following chapter I document the harmful behaviours experienced by the men within the sample and present a challenge to legal understandings of harm, which fuel normative assessments of what may be considered the most harmful experiences.

6 Understanding experiences of harmful behaviour

Within this study, the first of my research questions relates to how, if at all, violence or otherwise harmful behaviour is experienced by male sex workers. My principle aim within this chapter, therefore, is to contribute to understandings of how sex workers experience harm, debating the interrelationship between legal understandings of what is harmful and actual lived experiences of harm. In order to do this, the chapter begins by outlining the harmful experiences of those involved in the study, before proposing a framework of understanding harm set out within the criminal law and applying it to the experiences of the participants. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of harmful experiences which cannot be captured by these legal understandings, highlighting the shortcomings of both crime as a concept and criminology in capturing and responding to all that is harmful.

6.1 Experiences of harm

As I have set out in chapters 1 and 3, the categories of harmful behaviour with which this work is primarily concerned with are; physical violence, sexual violence, the removal or attempted removal of a condom without consent, robbery, blackmail, stalking or harassment, threatening behaviour, verbal abuse and time wasting. Within this section I present the findings of the survey and interview phases with a view to presenting an encompassing account of the harm discussed or outlined by the men who took part in this work.

In order to assess what experiences of harm were common amongst the men involved in the phase 1 survey, I included a question which asked, ‘Have you ever experienced any of the following whilst or because of you exchanging sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else?’ and provided a list of the 10 behaviours set out above. Whilst this question could not capture the frequency with which the men experienced each of these behaviours, it did capture the breadth of behaviours experienced. Indeed, the findings of the survey revealed that experiences of these behaviours were common amongst this sample of men, with all 10 of them having experienced at least 1 of the categories of behaviour. To further contextualise the experiences of the men, 7 had experienced more than one of the categories outlined, and 4 of the 10 had experienced 5 or more of the categories. For a cohort of the men involved in this phase, various types of harmful behaviour were something with which they have had to contend in relation to their sex work.

Similar to the findings of phase 1, experiences of harmful behaviour were common within the cohort of men who participated in the phase 2 interviews. All but 1 of the 7 men

discussed some level of experience of harmful behaviour categorised in table 1, with 4 of the categories being experienced by more than 1 of the men involved in this phase. Within the interviews, given their semi-structured nature and their purpose of supporting the initial findings with a more detailed discussion of reporting behaviours, I did not ask participants about each category of harm individually as I had in the survey. Therefore, although 4 of the behaviours outlined were not discussed by any of the interview participants, it is not possible to conclude that they had not experienced them, nor is it possible to conclude that experiences of the other behaviours were not more common. Whilst this is limiting in some regards, it is still possible to present an overall narrative of what behaviours the men who engaged with this study had reported to have experienced, giving some indication of the types of behaviour and level of harm that they face. In figure 4 I have combined the survey results with a quantitative account of the interview discussions, providing a combined insight into the experiences of the men.

Figure 4: Table outlining experiences of harm discussed by survey and interview participants.

| Behaviour | Survey (10) | Interview (7) | Combined (17) |
|--|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Physical violence | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Sexual violence | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Removal of condom without consent | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Attempted removal of condom without consent | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Robbery | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Blackmail | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Stalking/harassment | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Threatening behaviour | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Verbal abuse | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Time wasting | 8 | 4 | 13 |

Clear from the above is the considerable experience of the harmful behaviours considered within this study, with half of the total behaviours being experienced by 5 or more of the combined sample of men. Although there were limits to the survey question and the

interviewees had not been presented the full list of behaviours, this data provides a valuable insight into the types of harmful behaviour experienced by those involved. The findings reveal, for example, that the levels of physical violence (4 of 17) and robbery (4 of 17) reportedly experienced by the men were in line with the other behaviours, challenging common conceptions of the dangers most commonly faced by sex workers and the previous literature which has supported this notion (see Connelly, Kamerade and Sanders, 2018). Where these experiences were discussed within the interview sample however, they related to violence which may be deemed particularly severe. For example, Mason describes how he was found unconscious after being robbed, and Lorenzo describes his experience as:

We arrived to a little garden and he started to tell me give me your money, and I didn't have any money. He started to punch me. I ended up in the hospital.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

Experiences of physical violence were rather more frequent amongst the interview sample than the survey, and for Mason and Lorenzo, these experiences were also serious enough to warrant hospitalisation for the treatment of their injuries. These findings suggest that, although not something with which the majority of men had to contend, violence remains a serious concern to some men involved with selling or transacting sex.

The levels of sexual violence highlighted within the sample are also similarly poised, with just shy of a third of the men (5 of 17) discussing their experience at interview or indicating it within the survey. Jamel (2011) found that experiences of sexual violence were more infrequent amongst the male sex workers involved in their study. Indeed, of the 50 men involved in Jamel's study, only 3 had discussed their experience of sexual violence. It is noteworthy that in that particular work, the majority of the participants had not engaged with street-based sex work, whereas the sample for this work was more balanced in terms of how the men met clients and fulfilled transactions. The sampling framework of this study which combined the recruitment of men through internet enabled means, with the recruitment through support services, facilitated a sample of men who took various approaches to meeting clients and fulfilling the subsequent interactions. The strength of this work therefore, although boasting a smaller sample size, is that this variance in those who have taken part offers a more encompassing insight into the experiences of male sex workers between sectors.

Sexual violence came up in discussion with two of the men who had also highlighted their experience of physical violence. Harrison, for example, had discussed his experiences

related to nights out where he was not working, though his experiences were influenced by a sex work context (see section 7.1 for further discussion on this point). Mason discussed an incident which occurred within the context of a sexual transaction:

Obviously, I'd gone with someone and at first had him at my flat, and then we've met again I've gone back to his flat. He used an object; I woke up and he was doing things.

Mason (Sex working participant)

The way in which I approached discussions of sexual violence was purposefully broad, given the sensitivity of discussing specific experiences. I did, however, include specific questioning within the surveys around sexual violence which relates to the conditions upon which the sexual transaction is rested. This was discussed within the work as the attempted removal of a condom (4 of 10 survey participants) or the removal of a condom during intercourse without consent (3 of 10 survey participants), and was a fairly common experience amongst that particular cohort of men. Had the survey considered other forms of behaviour related to the conditions of the transaction, such as attempting behaviours not agreed within the initial negotiation or attempts to change the details of the negotiation such as the price, there would likely have been more than 4 of the men who had experienced this type of behaviour (see Oselin and Hail-Jares, 2021). Indeed, Harrison discusses being underpaid by a client in a clear breach of the terms of their transaction:

When someone short paid me down in (place name) and I'm like 'how do I go about this, what do I do about that short payment?' Yes, I walked away without counting the money. I messaged them after like 'what's going on?'

Harrison (Sex working participant)

Whilst clearly detrimental to the financial well-being of Harrison, it is less clear whether this may have been a harmful experience which he was able to report, given the context within which it had occurred, and the legitimacy afforded to sex work. This, amongst a number of the experiences of the men involved with the study, begins to raise questions around just how apt legal understandings of what constitutes acceptable behaviour are in appreciating the harms faced by male sex workers. The remainder of this chapter will firstly present a legal understanding of harm, before unpicking the limitations of this and their implications for the

ways in which the men interact with the systems of formal social control who take and respond to reports of violence and otherwise harmful behaviour.

6.2 A legal understanding of harm

With policing becoming increasingly evidence-led there have been multiple efforts worldwide to quantify not only the occurrence of crime, but also the perceived impact of particular offence types (Curtis-Ham and Walton, 2018). The Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI), as introduced in chapter 1, is an attempt to meaningfully measure the level of harm caused by criminal offence types, developed by Sherman, Neyroud and Neyroud (2016). The authors suggest that authorities cannot treat all crimes as equal, and that a weighted measurement of the harm caused by each crime type ensures that the police allocation of resources and development of crime prevention initiatives are properly informed. The CCHI is one of a number of Crime Harm Indexes developed internationally, alongside similar efforts in the United States, New Zealand, Sweden and Denmark. I focus here on the CCHI as a framework of understanding the expected harm caused by specific behaviours as it is grounded within a English and Welsh legal and cultural context. Although the actual behaviours themselves may remain the same or somewhat similar between cases and countries, the legal definitions and repercussions are dependent upon the respective penal code and cultural context within which they occur.

In order to weight the harm caused by different crime types, the chosen metric for the CCHI is the sentencing guidelines ‘starting point’. That is the minimum number of days in prison for a first-time offender convicted of the particular offence. Sherman, Neyroud and Neyroud argue that it is important to consider this figure rather than the actual sentence length received by an offender, as the latter is influenced by factors outside of the offence itself, such as previous offending history. As an example of the CCHI in practice, the starting point sentence for homicide is 5475 days imprisonment, for rape it is 1825 and for robbery 365. Within the hierarchy of these offence types, homicide would be considered as the most harmful, with robbery being the least harmful.

Utilising the principles of the CCHI then, enables the differentiation of behaviours which are deemed more or less harmful, based upon the response required to them within the law. Such an understanding of the severity of offence types provides a benchmark for discussing how the experiences of the men involved are both perceived and potentially responded to in a legal sense. This, in turn, facilitates some consideration of the dynamic

between this perceived severity of an experience and subsequent reporting behaviours, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter and the next.

In order to apply a CCHI understanding to the categories of harm that I have set out in this study, I have matched up the broader category with the most serious offence that the individuals taking part in this work could realistically have experienced themselves. For example, homicide would most neatly fit within the category of physical violence for the purpose of this work, however since homicide would involve the death of the victim, the next most serious offence type in this category, attempted murder, is more appropriate as a benchmark for the inclusion of physical violence as the most harmful category of behaviour. I applied these principles to the remaining 9 categories of harmful behaviour identified for this study, and then arranged these within groups of the ‘most harmful’, ‘more harmful’ and ‘less harmful’ behaviours, as understood by sentencing guidelines. The table below sets out the 10 categories of harmful behaviours, their group and the details upon which they were grouped:

Figure 5: Table categorising harmful behaviours using the CCHI.

| Group | Behaviour category | Highest minimum sentence within category (days) (categorised by the CCHI) |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Most harmful (1000+ days) | Physical violence | 3285 (attempted murder) |
| | Sexual violence | 1825 (rape) |
| | Removal of condom without consent | 1825 (categorised as rape) |
| | Attempted removal of condom without consent | 1825 (categorised as attempted rape) |
| More harmful (100 to 999 days) | Robbery | 547.5 (Robbery of a dwelling) |
| | Blackmail | 365 |
| | Stalking/harassment | 182.5 |
| Less Harmful (<100 days) | Threatening behaviours | 10 (threats to kill) |
| | Verbal abuse | 0 |
| | Time wasting | 0 |

As I have outlined above, using the framework supports a standardised assessment of the perceived severity of the behaviour as set out by the very system which seeks to punish

those who harm others. This is the same system which, in part, qualifies societal perceptions of what is acceptable behaviour, and which also may inform the types of behaviour which are seen as acceptable to report and those which are not (Adriaenssen *et al.*, 2020). Within this thesis, I do not seek to adapt the CCHI any further to create a new model of understanding harm. Instead, I use it to outline how the state responds to harmful behaviour and experiences through legal frameworks, and I show in the next section how this understanding of harm may influence how those who experience it both view said experiences, and interact with those who may be placed to support them.

6.3 A nuanced reality of harm

The findings of this research, as set out earlier in this chapter, reveal that there were experiences of each of the 10 categories of behaviour, though the most frequently represented were the behaviours that are listed within the CCHI informed ‘less harmful’ and those at the lower end of the ‘more harmful’. There were, however, behaviours within the ‘most harmful’ category and the higher end of the ‘more harmful’ which were more consistently highlighted amongst the men. The commonality of the experiences of time wasting amongst the cohort of men may go some way in explaining the impression outlined above that the ‘less harmful’ behaviours are set apart from the rest, though there were 4 or more of the men represented in 5 out of 7 of the ‘more’ and ‘most’ harmful categories of behaviour. With time wasting taken out of the equation, the men’s experiences were rather more consistent across the remaining categories of harm.

Existing literature which has approached the subject of harmful behaviour against sex workers more generally has highlighted that physical and sexual violence are amongst those most commonly experienced (Connelly, Kamerade and Sanders, 2018), and whilst this study also found there to be a number of experiences of these such behaviours amongst the sample, these were in line with the other categories detailed at the beginning of this section. Physical and sexual violence, understood to be amongst the most harmful criminal behaviours according to a framework informed by the CCHI, has been the focus of much of the existing literature focused on male sex workers experiences of harm (see Jamel, 2011; Scott *et al.*, 2005). It is possible that such a focus is influenced by the legal understandings of harm presented here, though based on the findings of this work, such a large focus on these particular types of experience detracts from any focus on those that the legal system and agencies are unable to recognise as harmful based on these normative assessments of harm.

The problem with focusing on normative and legally informed definitions of what is harmful, is that actual experiences of harm may well differ, as individual experience varies and victims respond in their own way (Dinisman and Moroz, 2017). Behaviours which are deemed to be less harmful in a legal sense, therefore, may actually have significant implications for the individual. For example, Harrison further discusses where he received a short payment, by suggesting:

I would say it's the physicals that would be viewed most as a harmful act but the indirect things, like I hadn't thought about the short payment as being a harmful act, but it is, it's theft of wages. Whichever way you want to put it, its breach of contract, its lying, it's a lot of different things. But my mind straight away went to violence or rape, like physical violence or rape.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

Significantly, Harrison describes here how he had not initially thought of the incident of short payment as being harmful, instead thinking of the 'physicals' of violence and rape as being the most harmful experiences. This is consistent with a CCHI informed understanding of harm, given physical and sexual violence sit as the most harmful behaviours categorised, and that short payment within a sex work context may fall outside of this legal understanding because of the perceived illegitimacy of this form of labour. He does however, go on to link the short payment to being a 'theft of wages' and a 'breach of contract', in an extract which is appreciative of the economically violent nature of the initial action.

With the illegitimacy afforded to sex work as a form of labour, Orchistan (2016) points to how elements such as job security, control of the labour process, pay and working conditions contribute to the degree of precariousness of the work. Indeed, much of Harrison's above discussion relates to the precarious nature of his sex work, and this was not the only way in which the more general precarious nature of sex work related labour emerged as facilitating harm within the interviews. Interesting amongst the discussions was the way in which the men involved understood time wasting and the potential harm that it may cause. Sanders (2008), describes time wasting as something which sex workers must contend with every working day. In later work, Sanders, Connelly and Jarvis-King (2016) suggest that time-wasting clients are amongst the elements of their work which sex workers are least fond of. Whilst these works present time wasters as both prevalent and frustrating for sex workers, neither really explore the potential for further harm both resultant of and caused by experiences of time wasting.

Time wasting, as I have suggested earlier in this chapter, was the most commonly experienced issue within the sample in general, and was the behaviour discussed in the most detail by the interview participants. When asked of time wasting, William suggests:

It's fucking annoying, you don't make as much money, you miss out on something else, or you could just not be thinking about that arse hole.

William (Sex working participant)

William describes the financial and emotional implications of time wasting, which are also picked up by Ryan:

There are people who experience a lot of time wasting, which is a big shame, and that can have a knock-on effect. For example, if they need to pay their rent and they've only got that night to make as much as they can to cover most of it. They don't really think that it could be a mental anguish for them, it could actually not put food on their kids' plate, it's just that misunderstanding.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

Here, Ryan moves the discussion away from the immediacy of the individual missing out on capital, to highlight the wider impact on them and others who may depend on them. Nathan also spoke about time wasting in similar terms, highlighting sex work related expenses and the preparatory labour required to fulfil a transaction. He also expands on this to highlight the potential implications for safety:

Secondly, it's a safety issue. How do you know you aren't being followed or watched as you turn up to a hotel or home that turns out to be empty?

Nathan (Sex working participant)

The direct harm in time wasting may not be as clear cut as some of the other behaviours listed, particularly given the lack of legal proscription for the behaviour, though the implications are clear from the above. Time wasting is economically harmful for the men involved in this type of work, as well as being a potential gateway which enables other types of harm to occur. For example, where Ryan discusses the idea that an individual may need to make up their earnings within the day to provide for basic needs, such as accommodation and food, this may influence

regular practices. Armstrong (2014) and Krüsi *et al.* (2014) discuss the importance of sex workers employing stringent screening for their clients, however it is scenarios such as that which Ryan presented which may mean that the balance between safety and earning money is weighted more so to the latter, and the individual may engage in riskier behaviours which they would normally avoid. Time wasting may indeed be a concern for businesses of all kinds, but where the balance of safe working practices are so often reliant on the time to make informed and rational decisions, the risks presented by the restriction of this time may be profound, in that sex workers are less able to safeguard themselves from potentially harmful situations. This may mean that an individual in this scenario may be increasingly exposed to further, and potentially more severe, experiences of harm. Time wasting, therefore, is both economically detrimental to the individual and has the potential to create risky scenarios by influencing needs and behaviours.

In silo, and viewed through the lens of the law, however, time wasting may be seen as something which is not serious or perhaps not at all harmful. Indeed, the law has no role to play where potential customers or clients do not go ahead with the purchase of services, therefore this issue does not require a criminal justice response, but instead relates to socially accepted labour practices and the notion that sex workers do not have the power to challenge (see Smith and Mac, 2018) in scenarios where they are treated in the ways that have been discussed within this section. The law and a legal understanding of harm, therefore, cannot fully account for the complexity of how harm is actually experienced by those involved in this work.

The study of Zemiology and social harm has highlighted that many harmful ‘events and incidents’ are not considered within an assessment of what is defined as crime (Hillyard and Tombs, 2007:12; Canning and Tombs, 2021). A Zemiological lens is important here in thinking about how crime and criminology does not accurately capture all of the harm experienced by an individual, though notably I have focused here on the actions of individuals within a context and environment shaped by state decision-making, rather than the decision of the state itself which may fundamentally be considered the root cause of the harm (see Canning and Tombs, 2021).

Indeed, the legal frameworks and subsequent illegitimacy of this particular type of labour are fundamental in creating the conditions under which sex work manifests (see Tremblay, 2021), under which harmful behaviours such as time wasting and short payment occur, and in determining which types of harmful behaviours may be reported. There is an argument, here, that these sorts of issues are legitimised by a state approach to sex work which

does not support the rights of the workers (Cruz, 2013), but instead outlines sex work as an undesirable activity (Pitcher and Wijers, 2014). Indeed Armstrong (2021), applying a social harms perspective to sex work, suggests that repressive policies ‘compound societal conditions that are already harmful, creating additional harms relating to physical and mental wellbeing, autonomy, recognition and social inclusion’. The conditions under which sex workers are required to operate and in which harm occurs therefore, are fundamentally shaped by systems and structures which marginalise and oppress sex workers (see Vanwesenbeeck, 2017).

These same systems and structures also set out and define the particular behaviours and actions which are to be considered harmful, but remain ignorant to a range of other issues which have the potential to cause harm in their own right. Particularly telling of this argument are the peripheral offences related to selling sex, which mean that under this legal definition of harm the act of selling sex itself is considered more harmful than the issues of short payment and time wasting which have been discussed in detail in this chapter.

These normative understandings of what is harmful enshrined within legal definitions and informing police practices cannot properly respond to all of the harms which are faced by the men involved in this work, nor perhaps should they. Supporting sex workers and reducing or eradicating their exposure to this type of behaviour is a complex task that goes beyond wider criminal justice responses and the opening of reporting streams, beyond, also, the extension of police focus through the implementation of training packages. Instead, understanding and responding to all of the harm faced by the men involved in this study requires rethinking harm, and fundamental social change related to how sex work is approached as a profession.

6.4 Chapter summary

The aim of this chapter has been to better understand how male sex workers experience violence and otherwise harmful behaviours, if at all, in line with question 1 of this research study. As I have made clear throughout this chapter, the findings of this research suggest that experiences of the harmful behaviours set out within this study were common, with all but 1 of the 17 men raising some level of experience during interview or within their survey response. Of these experiences, time wasting (13) was by far the most commonly raised, followed by sexual violence, stalking/harassment, threatening behaviour and verbal abuse (5). There were several significant experiences of harm discussed within the sample, including incidents which had led to the hospitalisation of the participant. The ways in which the men discussed issues

which may legally be considered less harmful was of interest, with the interview participants expanding on the survey findings which highlighted time wasting as a common experience.

Within this chapter, I have used the issue of time wasting as an example of how legal frameworks cannot fully capture or appreciate the experiences of harm faced by the men. Indeed, by using the CCHI as a framework of conceptualising how harm is defined and understood, the findings of this research reveal that despite the many criminally defined experiences of harm, a legal proscription of what is harmful fails to fully capture the experiences that the men themselves felt to be harmful. The way in which these lesser recognised harmful actions and behaviours were experienced by the men was, in part, informed by the legitimacy afforded to sex work as a profession, and the lack of power therefore, that sex workers have to establish and enforce policies related to how sexual transactions are arranged, fulfilled and remunerated.

Whilst this is explored in the context of understanding experiences within this chapter, there is potential influence on reporting practices as the structures and systems which prevent and respond to such behaviour are not as clearly defined and accessible as those related to criminally defined behaviours. The systematic focus on criminal behaviour means that for these men, some of their experiences slip through the net and become seen as a frustrating part of engaging in this type of work, rather than something acknowledged as genuinely harmful.

The next chapter considers reporting behaviours in more detail, where I outline the barriers to reporting discussed by those within the sample and present a theoretical understanding of their influence.

7 Reporting behaviours and related barriers

In this chapter I present the reporting behaviours of the men involved in this study, including a discussion of the theoretical and actual reporting levels and a consideration of to whom the men felt most comfortable disclosing an experience to. The narratives of the men, practitioners and police will also be presented to explore the perceived barriers to reporting and their potential solutions. Through the analysis of these narratives, I present a theoretical understanding of the barriers to reporting which considers the structural influences with which the men must contend, and which ultimately shapes the ways in which they interact with the relevant systems and individuals.

7.1 The reporting of harmful behaviours

Previous research has highlighted the reluctance of sex workers to report their experiences of crime, though this has mostly been limited to the perspective of female sex workers and their reporting of crime to the police (see Church *et al.*, 2001). Connelly, Kamerade and Sanders (2018) more recently extend what is known about the reporting practices of sex workers, considering reports made to NUM and any subsequent interactions with the police, whether anonymously or with full consent from the victim of the incident. Similarly, Campbell and colleagues (2020) focus on UglyMugs.ie data, highlighting disparities between those willing to report their experiences to the third-party reporting scheme and the police. Importantly, previous work such as the studies mentioned above are very much focused on the more formal mechanisms of reporting crimes, given the existing systems and structures discussed in the previous chapters. There remains little knowledge about the less formal disclosure to others who may be in a position to help, such as support service practitioners and peer support networks, though I do go some way to exploring these alternate systems of reporting in this work.

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, experiences of harm were fairly frequent amongst the sample of men who took part in this work. The reporting of harm, was however, far less so. There were a combined 50 experiences of the 10 categories of behaviour set out, and of these only 3 were reported in any way. In the survey, only one participant suggested that they had reported an incident against them. This individual, who had experienced threatening behaviour, the attempted removal of condom without consent and time wasting had only reported their experience of time wasting, and also had only disclosed this information to other people involved in sex work. Of the incidents occurring within a sex work context which were

discussed at interview, no reports were made directly to the police or NUM. This is despite all participants being aware of NUM or other services who support sex workers.

Whilst under reporting has been recognised within the existing literature as being an issue, the rates of reporting within this study are particularly low when compared with similar studies with female sex workers. For example, McBride and colleagues (2020) suggest that 38 per cent of the women involved in their study had reported their experience of violence to the police, and 20 per cent of Benoit's (2021) participants had reported their experiences. Whilst these figures still represent the minority of those who had experienced violence, there is a significant gap between the reporting behaviours of their respective samples and the sample of men taking part in this work.

The police were made aware of two of the incidents discussed by the men involved through third parties, however. Firstly, one case of physical assault which had occurred in a public place was witnessed and subsequently reported by a member of the public. In this case, the individual co-operated with the police investigation, and the perpetrator was imprisoned. A second incident also occurred in a public space, though it was less clear how the police were made aware of the incident. The interviewee had reported that the police attempted to contact him whilst he was hospitalised, though he did not wish to pursue the case any further.

Similarly, no report was made to either the police or NUM in the case of sexual assault within the brothel that one participant in the interviews was working in. In this case, whilst it was common knowledge with those who worked within the brothel, the victim did not want to pursue matters any further and no report was made. Important within this incident, was the space within which it occurred. The brothel presented a setting exclusive to commercial sex, therefore leaving no question of the sex work context of the incident. Interestingly, Harrison, who did not report experiences of harmful behaviour within a sex work context to the police, also discussed within the interview incidents which had occurred outside of a sex work setting, which were reported to the police. Harrison went on to discuss that whilst these reports were made to the police, he was careful not to discuss his transactional sexual behaviour, perhaps highlighting the barriers to reporting that can be presented specifically by the sex work context.

Interestingly, particularly in consideration of the paucity of reporting demonstrated by the above, was how the men involved in the survey phase had identified their likelihood to report the categories of harm which they *had not* experienced before:

Figure 6: Table outlining survey participants likelihood of reporting categories of harm they had not experienced.

| Behaviour | Very likely | Likely | Unsure | Unlikely | Very unlikely |
|--|-------------|--------|--------|----------|---------------|
| Physical violence | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Sexual violence | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Removal of condom without consent | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Attempted removal of condom | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Robbery | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Blackmail | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Stalking/Harassment | 1 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Threatening behaviour | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Verbal abuse | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Time wasting | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

Of particular interest were the number of men who answered that they were ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to report physical and sexual violence should they experience them. Although experiences of neither in a sex work context were directly reported by any of the participants, over half of those who had not experienced these behaviours in the survey felt that they would report them if they did. There is a disparity between the reporting of actual experience and theoretical experience, and whilst I cannot draw specific conclusions as to why there was this disparity with my available data, FeldmanHall and colleagues (2012) highlight how there are often differences in how people say they would behave in a given situation, and how they actually do. The research (*ibid*:434) refers to the ‘tangible rewards and consequences’ which influence actual decision-making, whereas the initial response is informed more closely by moral ideals. Morally, the behaviours are set out as being wrong within the legal proscription of the offence types, however the rewards and consequences of reporting are weighed against the barriers to reporting discussed later within this chapter.

The next question in the survey related to who the respondent would be most comfortable reporting their experience of harmful behaviours, which provides some additional

perspective to how more formal reporting mechanisms are viewed. Only 2 of the 10 participants answered the police in this question, and just 4 of the men answered NUM. It seems that the men were far more comfortable reporting in less formal, or certainly less criminal justice related settings, such as to other people who exchange sex (9), to a healthcare professional (8) and to friends (5). This is not unexpected, indeed NUM itself was initially designed as a grassroots programme which can gather intelligence about individuals who may pose risk to sex workers, in a way which is less formal and removed from the criminal justice system. Naturally however, NUM in its current format holds a plethora of intelligence about perpetrators of violence, and quite rightly works with the police in this area to ensure the safety of sex workers and to achieve justice for those who wish to seek it.

Although there was opportunity for the participants to discuss less formal mechanisms of reporting, such as talking to friends, family or other sex workers, the use of the term ‘report’ in the original question itself may have given the impression that only formal mechanisms of reporting were considered. Wording the initial question on reporting as ‘have you ever told anybody about this incident?’ may well have opened up further discussions of less formal reporting, adding to the questions aimed at exploring these alternative methods of reporting later on in the survey. Despite this potential limitation, there was a clear reluctance, within both sections of the sample, for the men to report their experiences of harmful behaviour. The findings presented within this section indicate that there are barriers to reporting experienced by male sex workers, and these will be explored in more detail in the next section.

7.2 Barriers to reporting

Sex workers face significant barriers to reporting their victimisation (Campbell *et al.*, 2020; McBride *et al.*, 2020; Connelly, Kamerade and Sanders, 2018). As demonstrated within this chapter, the men involved in this study presented as reluctant to report their experiences of harmful behaviour. In order to better understand the barriers to reporting presented both within the narratives of the men involved in this research, and also those highlighted within the existing literature, it is important to appreciate what causes these barriers and how they surface within the lives of the individual. It has been clear throughout the analysis of this work that barriers to reporting do not exist within a vacuum. The specific presenting issues which influence reporting are often a product of outside influences, and the way in which an individual internalises said influences. Within this chapter I present the discussions of barriers to reporting within three distinct categories, relating to the social environment, the social

authority and the individual. Before presenting the narrative of the participants, I outline each of the three categories and the issues to which they relate.

Firstly, environmental barriers relate to the societal context within which the incident occurs. Within this category discussions centre around the stigma of identities, including a sex work identity, non-heteronormative sexual identities and masculine identities which do not conform to societal expectations. Whilst it is these environmental factors which may create any barriers to reporting, this chapter will show that barriers may manifest as shame or embarrassment where an individual does not behave in the way in which society deems acceptable. Secondly, related to figures of authority such as the police, social care and the government, barriers within this category are fuelled by both personal experiences of contact with figures of authority, and also historical or second-hand accounts of dealings with these figures. The barriers here may manifest as a fear of not being believed or of being criminalised themselves, causing a general mistrust of police activity in this area. The third category relates to the individual, or perhaps their internalisation of the aforementioned factors. The barriers here sit within the middle of these wider contexts experienced by the men. Caused by the internalisation of the aforementioned outside influences, these barriers manifest within the data as a preservation of self, or the influence of the perception of self. Specifically, this may see an individual prioritise the need to maintain their anonymity within sex work over seeking support, or perhaps minimise their experiences of harm when discussing them.

Barriers to reporting then, relate to the environment within which the participants live their lives, the authority by which their behaviour is governed and by the individual's internalisation of these two wider influences. Importantly, although the environment and the authority are presented as two separate entities, they are interlinked in that they both inform and are informed by the other. For example, the environmental context has clear implications for the barriers relating to authority. Policing priorities are often shaped by wider public perceptions of an issue, whilst the law being enforced by the police has much influence on how the public perceives an issue in the first place. The individual on the other hand, is influenced by these external factors but has limited influence outside of the boundaries of their own performance of self.

The following sections will present the barriers to reporting as they were understood by both survey and interview participants, and in accordance to where the barriers sit amongst the conceptual framework discussed above.

7.2.1 Perceived barriers within the survey sample

Using a combination of the existing literature (see for example Hammond, Ioannou and Fewster, 2016; Wolf *et al.*, 2003), discussions with third sector organisations who work with male sex workers, and the views of the participants of the pilot survey, I determined a list of potential barriers to reporting. These barriers have since been categorised in accordance with the above framework, as is reflected in the below table. In order to establish which, if any, resonated with the participants, this list was presented within the survey and participants were asked how strongly they felt that these were barriers to reporting:

Figure 7: Survey participants perceptions of potential barriers to reporting.

| Barrier category | Barriers to reporting | Not at all | Not very strongly | Unsure | Strongly | Very strongly |
|---------------------|--|------------|-------------------|--------|----------|---------------|
| Environment | Attitudes towards sex between men | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| | Attitudes towards sex work | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| | Attitudes towards men | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Authority | Fear of not being believed | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | Mistrust of the police | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| | Disruption caused by a court case | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| | No witness to the incident | 0 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| | Fear of being criminalised | 0 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Internalised | Fear of being outed for exchanging sex | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Incident could be dealt with in your own way | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Haven't wanted to talk about the incident | 4 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Incident wasn't serious enough | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 1 |

As shown in figure 7, the issues which participants most frequently felt strongly or very strongly were barriers to reporting were attitudes towards sex work (8), the fear of not being believed, the fear of being outed for exchanging sex, a mistrust in the police, the disruption caused by a court case and there being no witness to the incident (7). Notably, whilst all three categories of barrier are represented within those selected most frequently, barriers relating to the authority outnumbered those related to the environment and the individual. Similarly, Penfold and colleagues (2004) find that the barriers to reporting for the women in their sample relate most strongly to the authority, including the idea that the police would judge them for their sex working behaviours. Ultimately, the reporting of harmful behaviours and the authority may be perceived as intrinsically linked in a way which both environmental and internal factors may be less so. The authority provides a physical and recognisable presence and may therefore be more easily identifiable as a factor in the decision to report an incident.

Despite this, the significance of both the individual and environmental factors were stressed in more detail in the interview phase of the research, recognised by both the men and the practitioners working with them as impacting their own, and others, reporting behaviour. The next sections will further analyse the barriers to reporting, and will be presented according to the conceptual framework outlined in 6.4.

7.2.2 Barriers related to the social environment

Wider attitudes towards sex work and the stigma related to transactional sexual relationships have widely been discussed as a barrier to sex workers seeking support (see for example, Lazarus *et al.*, 2012; Zhender *et al.*, 2019), and it may be no surprise that the survey participants felt most strongly about this as a barrier. Although it is clear that many of the men engaged

with this study may not necessarily identify themselves as sex workers, there is an understanding that their behaviours match those which are classed as sex work, and therefore the stigma associated with the identity may still impact the decision to seek help and support for incidents occurring within this context.

Research focused specifically on male sex work has presented the stigma faced by men as ‘double’ in comparison to women, highlighting not only the transactional nature of their relationships but also their featuring of male sexual partners (Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013). Whilst stigma creates all manner of issues for men engaged with transactional sex, it was scarcely discussed by the men as a barrier in of itself. The barriers to reporting instead arose from the environmental conditions caused by stigma, such as the need to maintain anonymity, the acceptability of violence against sex workers and the social reception of sex between men. Practitioner Rebecca highlights the impact of stigma, which not only creates a barrier to reporting to the police, but also limits the opportunities for sex workers to engage with services and may also drive violence against sex workers:

So, stigma for sex workers means that, that creates barriers for them in terms of how they access services, how they report to police, and police and services are quite often the perpetrators of stigma, even though they might not be aware of that they quite often are. And they're some of the challenges that we address in the education programs that we do. Just making people aware that the language that they use is stigmatizing, you know, even ‘exiting services’, I find that quite stigmatising, calling yourself an ‘exiting service’ that kind of stigmatizes sex workers which creates the issues which creates the barriers which creates the under reporting, which creates the targeted violence. So, stigmas huge.

Rebecca (Practitioner)

One of the biggest challenges in relation to stigma is that, as Rebecca observes, the police and wider support services can often be the perpetrators of stigma themselves and for many sex workers, this expectation shapes their interaction with such agencies (Klambauer, 2017). If a police or service approach is deemed to be stigmatising, then it is likely that many will avoid contact with that agency, meaning that the required support may be perceived to be inaccessible. Not only does stigma reduce the likelihood of an individual reporting, but it also has a role in driving the violence and harmful behaviours committed against sex workers

(Sanders, 2016). Kurtis takes this point further, and within this he notably shifts the discussion back to female sex workers, and the vulnerability that they face:

It is a job where a lot of people behave badly, and I think you are more vulnerable, particularly as a female sex worker and I think people feel comfortable mistreating sex workers or pushing their boundaries in a way that you wouldn't with a normal person that you were working with or contracting with. That is probably a result of the law but also societal stigma and attitudes.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Kurtis moves on to discuss how stigma also creates barriers to prevent the reporting of these behaviours which he deems stigma itself to have a role in driving:

I think outing is a big thing. The thing I am most frightened of is outing because of the stigma that would be attached to it in the wider world and its impact upon employment.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

This was common amongst the sample of men within the study, with most limiting those who knew about their engagement with transactional sex to other sex workers, their clients and in limited cases, close friends. Ryan offered an observation as to how the stigma associated with male sex work may also be driven by its relatively unknown status in comparison to female sex work:

Do you think men face stigma for sex working?

Jordan (Researcher)

It's like I said, it's not really known or in the public eye, male sex work. A lot of male sex workers don't really talk about their past or their current situation or doing that kind of work. It's taken 12 years for me to even speak about it, cos I just don't know what people are going to react as.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

With female sex work frequently represented in popular culture, and traditionally far more visible to the public, there is a level of social understanding and acknowledgement of its intricacies. Whilst there may be many common misconceptions of female sex work the paucity of knowledge around male sex work and its more hidden nature means that far less is understood about what drives men to participate in sex work. William presents an interesting observation around the expectations of men within society, and their role as provider for themselves or their family:

There is quite a big difference I think, the guys would probably tend to do it more online, probably because of the nature of our society as well where guys feel more oppressed, you know mental health, they always have to feel like the 'man' you know. The breadwinner so they'd probably be a little more closed about it you know and have to do it in a different way. It's not very often you go out and you see guys kerb crawling the streets.

William (Sex working participant)

Whilst a male sex worker is able to generate income from their transactional sex, this form of income is not widely perceived as legitimate. Not only does this impact the way in which men practice sex work, in terms of the way clients are met and services are advertised, but it also impacts the individual's access to services and support should either or both be required. It is clear that stigma has a wide-reaching impact on the environment within which sex work operates and can lead to the manifestation of multiple barriers to seeking support. Sex work stigma is but one of the environmental barriers faced by the men within this study, as William had suggested above. The next section explores these wider expectations of men and how identities which are in contrast to them may experience multiple levels of stigma, influencing both their reporting behaviours and their perspective of how the world perceives them and their transactional sexual behaviours.

7.2.2.1 Expectations of men

The previous section began with some discussion of the specific stigma men face within sex work, based upon their sexual behaviours which are perceived to be in contrast with the heteronormative ideal. Whilst 'attitudes towards sex between men' were identified to be a

barrier by a majority of the survey participants (6), the answers to the wider ‘attitudes towards men’ were more varied. It is perhaps more surprising that ‘attitudes towards men’ was amongst the barriers least identified by those who took part in this element of the study, particularly given the significance placed on attitudes towards masculinity by the participants, and the more subconscious influences of masculine identities, presented within the previous chapter.

As has been discussed, socially there are various persistent expectations of men and masculinity around their self-reliance and ability to protect their own interest. From a health context, Farrimond (2012) explores men’s avoidance of seeking medical care, finding the reluctance to seek help to be driven by said masculine stereotypes and expectations. Huntley and colleagues (2019) explore men’s help seeking behaviours in a domestic abuse context, highlighting how coming forward to report such experiences presents a challenge to their masculinity. What is clear from both studies, is that it is social expectations of masculinity and the attempts to maintain an image consistent with these, which contribute to driving the barriers to men seeking support. Whilst the men who participated in the survey did not suggest overwhelmingly that ‘attitudes towards men’ was significant in their decision to report or not, there are clear indications of the impact of the negotiation of masculine identity within the narrative of the interview participants.

In the case of a man selling sex, sex work stigma intersects with the stigmatisation of their other behaviours and characteristics. Multiple levels of stigma effecting male sex workers have been identified throughout previous research (see for example Jiao and Bungay, 2018; Koken *et al.*, 2004), with men engaged in this type of work often behaving in ways which digress from what would be considered normative sexual relationships in both their perceived motivations and their expected partners. Police officer 2 raises this point within their interview, highlighting how involvement with the police may mean exposure to both sex work related stigma, and the stigma associated with sex between men:

There’s a whole range of reasons why sex workers, both male and female, may choose not to report to the police, or to not have trust in not just the police, but other organisations, whether they are NGOs or other organisations of the state such as health workers etc. about what they are doing. That’s further compounded with the gay sex work scene where some may not be out as gay, so not only would they be outing themselves a sex worker but also outing themselves as being gay. The stigma associated with that is doubly felt by some sex workers in that particular position.

Police officer 2

Here, police officer 2 discusses the position of gay men who are not out as gay and the barriers that they face in seeking support. Although it is clear that there remains some level of stigma to all sexual relationships between men, the interview participants primary concern in this area was the impact of stigma on men who identify their personal sexual preference as straight and have transactional interactions with other men. These concerns were raised by secondary accounts, as only one of the men interviewed identified their sexual preference in their personal lives as straight, and this individual did not discuss any sexual activity with other men outside of taking bookings from ‘married couples’.

Straight male sex workers who engage with transactional sex with other men are typically identified as survival sex workers (Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013; Baral *et al.*, 2015), working to meet basic need rather than adopting sex work as a more significant lifestyle choice. It is likely that many of these men would not identify themselves as sex workers *per se*, as highlighted within discussions of identity in chapter 4, and would also be reluctant to discuss such issues because of the internal and external stigmas associated with them. For practitioner Angela, many of the men who she had engaged with through her service provision were straight and selling sex to men:

I think because of social perceptions I think it’s difficult for heterosexual men that are selling gay sex to come forward. And I guess that comes from your social norms and social expectations. But then there's other men that will be quite open, but you would find its the heterosexual men selling gay sex that are really closed off.

Angela (Practitioner)

Importantly here, Angela refers to social norms and expectations shaping barriers to reporting, as William had previously done when referring to men as ‘bread winners’. Elliot, Louise, police officers 1 and 2 discuss this point further and develop the narrative to focus both on the impact of sexual behaviours between men and also how these intersect with expectations of masculinity to shape barriers to seeking support:

It's kind of stepping outside the male role or what we understand to be the male role. I've seen a lot of, particularly the lads who say they are straight that we work with. And yeah, they're much coyer about it than the gay men we work with would be. And you can just

see that it doesn't always sit right with them, if that makes sense. Like this, it makes them uncomfortable that they do this sometimes.

Elliot (Practitioner)

I think that's one of the key issues, it's for me, why they don't come forward. Because, you know, society has gender roles doesn't it for men and women, there's no getting away from that. But if you look at specifically, you know, these men, who are selling themselves to other men, usually. Their sense of masculinity, which has been brought up from day one, saying, 'this is what you do, this is how you look, you don't cry, you don't', that must be an internal turmoil for somebody, which is really, really difficult to sort of get out of.

Louise (Practitioner)

I think for individuals who are learning to love themselves and be accepting of themselves, if they are wrestling with their own sexuality, their self-confidence or self-esteem, if you are already questioning your own self-worth around your sexuality, if you then are clinging to a residual self-worth based around your masculinity. So you are a sex worker who's then become assaulted or a victim of a crime, and you're then questioning not just your sexuality but your own views around your masculinity, your propensity to report an offence is going to be lower than someone who has full confidence and trust in their own ability. People do prey upon the weak and vulnerable don't they, and people who are having to second guess their own views of themselves are going to be less likely to report stuff.

Police officer 2

Yeah, I think it's in general, not just for sex workers, even, you know, domestic violence, there's stigma around that. And even a male person coming forward to report a crime in itself, I think you know, there is still a stigma about that...I think it's a tale as old as time, you know...the 'don't cry, what you crying for? Man up'. You know, sort of the stigma that comes with that.

Police officer 1

Louise and police officer 2 raise important points here around the internalisation of stigma and the impact that this can have on an individual. The men are impacted not only by how society believes men should behave and present, but their own internal ideology of what it means to be a man which has been formed through these external expectations. An aspect of the male role constructed within society, discussed in detail within the previous chapter, is their expected invulnerability. One of the primary characteristics of the masculine being is their independence and their ability to protect and provide for themselves and those who depend on them (Brannon, 2011). These characteristics may be perceived as incompatible with an individual experiencing harmful behaviours, with their ability to protect themselves called into question. Louise went on to describe an interaction with a male victim of domestic abuse who had attempted to disclose this to his manager at work and was subsequently laughed at and told to ‘give her a punch’, and summarised the scenario by saying:

If you're a man, especially, you know, you're over five stone you're expected to be able to look after yourself. You wouldn't say that to anyone out in the street. If you were a man and you had your bag robbed now, why would you not go to the police just because you're a man? You would if you were in that position. So, there's something about, again, society as a whole, that attitude about why men should be able to look after themselves in whatever situation they are in.

Louise (Practitioner)

A discussion with Marcus highlighted that the male reluctance to seek support is not limited to sex work, or even cases of experiencing crime or harm more generally, however. He highlights the stubbornness of men, and the reluctance to seek support in other aspects of their lives, including asking for directions when lost and seeking support for health issues:

If things go wrong to men, how long will it be before they seek help? They'll bury their head in the sand, they'll be like, ‘no, I can deal with it. I can deal with it.’ Maybe go back to that masculinity and not want to lose face not want to lose pride. ‘I am a man I can sort it; I can deal with anything’.

Marcus (Practitioner)

You know, again, if you look at all these issues at the minute with sexual assault, the sports managers and coaches exploiting young boys. It's been years and they've put it to

one side. And with Michael Jackson, those two guys who did that Neverland documentary, where have they been until now? Men are just stubborn, they will just deny, deny, deny. and it gets to a point where they think 'no, I've got to do it'. I don't think that's just specific to sex work.

Marcus (Practitioner)

Asking for help or support in any form may cause difficulty for men, who are expected to be independent and strong. For a man to report their own experience of harm is for them to admit their vulnerability at that moment at time. Indeed, both the act of selling sex (Logan, 2010) and also finding themselves in a situation where they are unable to protect themselves, raise a challenge to the masculine identity (Ellis, 2017). There were no straight men who sell sex to men represented directly within this study, though a number of practitioners discussed how for this particular sub-group, the challenges to their masculinity are heightened by the conflict between their personal sexual preference and their transactional sexual behaviours. What is clear however, from the way in which the men negotiate their position within the hierarchy of masculine identities, is that the maintenance of a projection of masculinity is not limited to those who conform most closely to normative standards. Masculinity may pose a barrier to the reporting or help-seeking behaviours of all men, whether their masculine identity occupies a hegemonic or subordinate position in relation to others. Both the management of a masculine identity, and the negotiation of stigmatised identities such as that associated with sex work, influence reporting behaviours in that men may be less likely to come forward if doing so poses a threat to the maintenance and performance of these identities.

Reactions which question why the individual was not able to take care of themselves, or where men are not taken seriously when reporting abuse reinforce both the stigma of male victimisation and the idea that men should not allow themselves to become vulnerable. With a male sex worker reporting their experience of harm they are not only admitting vulnerability, but also their involvement in sex work and potentially their sexual activity with other men. All three raise a significant challenge to the masculinity of an individual and combine to present a barrier to reporting which to some, may be perceived as insurmountable.

7.2.3 Barriers and authority

Within the survey, the proposed barriers which relate to authority figures were amongst those most frequently identified by the men. The fear of not being believed, a mistrust of the police and the disruption caused by a court case were three of the factors that the men felt most

strongly were barriers to their reporting. Supporting this within the interviews, barriers related to authority were amongst those most frequently discussed, with participants highlighting the impact of the legal framework, experiences of interaction with the police and other agencies with authority and also the impact of interactions outside of their own experience. Whilst the police do not represent the only authority figure which these barriers relate to, they often represent the most visible element of this wider system of behaviour management and are therefore the agency most frequently discussed within the narrative of the participants.

7.2.3.1 Fear of judgement and criminalisation

Barriers to reporting relating to the way in which men believed the police or other agencies would react to their experiences of harmful behaviours were commonly discussed by the sample of men, practitioners and police interviewed for this work. There were multiple layers to this, including the feeling that the police may judge their working behaviours, sexual behaviours and also their experience of harm. Harrison, for example highlights why he did not seek police support when he had experienced criminal behaviour in a sex work context:

I've not gone to the police because I don't feel safe in doing that, I feel that the police would judge me.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

Clear within the narrative of Harrison, perhaps influenced by the impact of the environment within which sex work sits, is a wariness of the reaction that the police may have had if he disclosed this experience. Interestingly, he goes further in his interview to discuss that he had made reports to the police about incidents which had occurred outside of a sex work context, and that he was careful not to mention his engagement in transactional sex within this interaction. This suggests that for him, the main barrier was judgement related to the sex work context itself, rather than the wider expectations of men and masculinity earlier addressed within this chapter. The impact of the context within which the victim and perpetrator met was also discussed by practitioner Yvonne, who suggests that:

It's funny some people would ring the police about getting something robbed in their hostel, but they wouldn't ring them about something to do with sex work. It's not a

complete distrust of the police, it's the fact that 'because of how I met them, I ain't ringing the police'.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

As well as the fear that the police may judge them coming forward with sex work related matters, there were also suggestions that the perception that an individual will not be taken seriously or be listened to were barriers to reporting. These barriers have been widely reported in previous research and are common to both male and female victims inside and outside of a sex work context (see for example Campbell, 2016; Connelly, Kamerade and Sanders, 2018; Sable *et al.*, 2006). Practitioner Marcus highlighted how he saw this being a barrier in his experience, and expanded by discussing the potential legal ramifications for an individual whose initial contact with the police related to them reporting an incident, and also the difficulty getting men to seek help more generally:

Barriers for the men... pride, again not wanting to seem like they've cried out for help. And then on the flip side then like, not being listened to, not be taken seriously by the service or the police or whoever they reported to. Not getting the outcome or going to report about something but then getting pulled into something else. 'You're reporting this, but we'll search you and we found drugs on you so we're going to prosecute'. Or worrying this is going to affect probation and worrying about that. Not being listened to is the main one, not being taken seriously.

Marcus (Practitioner)

Marcus' experience of working with a drug and alcohol service very much frames his perspective of barriers to reporting, however the point he raises about potential legal ramifications is an important one. Owing to the unclear legal framework for sex work in England and Wales, many sex workers will be in conflict with the law at some point within their working lives (Lang, 2015). Indeed, previous research has suggested that potential the potential of being criminalised themselves is one of the key barriers to sex workers reporting crime against them (Lutnick, 2019), and this was echoed throughout the interview process. When asked whether the legal framework surrounding sex work was a barrier to reporting, Nathan said:

Absolutely, there will be a lack of people coming forward if they think they themselves will be legally judged.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

From a policing perspective, police officer 1 discusses how the threat of criminalisation means that for many of the sex workers within their force area, there were barriers not only to reporting but also to engaging with the police in general:

Yeah, they do believe, or they know they're committing offenses. So sometimes they do. I did have one sex worker in here that she didn't want report because she's committing offenses and she could be arrested herself... And as soon as they see police officers come up on (place name), they're on their toes. They know what's coming, the Police officers are going to be speaking to them, they're going to be issued with a dispersal order, direction to leave the area. So, you know, they sort of pre-empt that and they're off on their toes.

Police officer 1

The influence of the sex work context is clear within police officer 1's narrative, where they describe an area which is known locally for street-based sex work. For an individual who believes that they are behaving in contrast with the law, it is clear why for them, police involvement in their lives may be undesirable. Whilst this relates to the application of the legal framework by individual forces, police actions are largely driven by the overarching direction to governing sex work taken by the state.

Where there is less chance of a sex worker being criminalised for their actions, interactions and relations with the police may improve as fears of criminal consequences are somewhat dispelled. Indeed, the decriminalised approach taken to sex work in New Zealand has been credited for helping foster improved relations between sex workers and the authorities, with Healy (2018) of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective, suggesting that the legal approach has encouraged collaboration between the two groups that was lacking under the previous legislation. Whilst Healy does suggest that New Zealand's model which decriminalises sex work is not perfect, citing there being no protection against discrimination for sex workers and sex working on a temporary visa not being permitted, the idea that any

reassurance given around criminal sanctions for the sex worker has clear benefits for opening a dialogue between sex workers and the police is a logical one. The continued criminalisation of behaviours associated with sex work, such as soliciting, loitering and brothel keeping, maintains the notion that for sex workers, seeking the help of the police presents a risk that it is their behaviours which may ultimately come under scrutiny.

Practitioner Louise develops this discussion of the fear of criminalisation and the sex work context, highlighting how perhaps some individuals may not feel as though they can seek justice for something which occurs within a sex work context, fearing that they themselves were committing an offence:

It sounds stupid to us that someone might think that being beaten up or having money robbed while doing a transaction isn't a crime, but they're so scared, thinking that what they're doing itself is a crime. How do they even go to the Police and say 'excuse me I'm a sex worker, I was exchanging sex with that man and then he robbed me'?

Louise (Practitioner)

There were suggestions that even where an individual had faced an experience of harmful behaviour outside of a sex work context, it is possible that the fear of repercussions for their sex working behaviour may influence the interaction between them and the police. On this subject, Harrison said:

I've made very sure not to mention to the police about doing any sex work because I don't want them to jump to any conclusion of, oh well you were working on those two nights. It's like, that's completely irrelevant but I know that it will be used, and it won't just be used it will be used against me, so that's something. I am aware as well that you can't sell on the street, you can't walk the street like the ladies do. I also know that any type of sex work is going to be seen by the police as a not right thing.

Harrison (Sex working participant)

Here the individual suggests that not only may his sex work be used within the case of the incident he is reporting, but may also be raised in connection to his own behaviours. He highlights sex working on the street and the potential criminal offences associated with that as a barrier to him disclosing his sex work, however further discussion about legal repercussions

from Kurtis highlights how this may not be the only legal concern for men considering whether to report their experiences:

I think the feeling is they will get you for something, people are aware that soliciting is a crime that you could be done for. I'll tell you the other thing, that probably people worry about is tax. How many people are paying tax? The moment you draw attention to yourself and your cash in hand payments, you're going to be scrutinised. So, are they going to get you for being in a disorderly house, are they going to get you for soliciting in some way, or are they going to ask where all of your money came from? Or are they going to throw you out of the country because you are a Brazilian? You just don't want the police in your business if you can possibly help it.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Kurtis ends here on a really interesting point, highlighting that perhaps much of the reluctance to report stems from not wanting the police involved in their life at all. There are a plethora of reasons why police involvement may cause difficulty for many involved in transactional sex, as he sets out. With clients also often wary of police attention (Krusi *et al.*, 2014), too much involvement with the police within the current legal framework may also be 'bad for business'. Where reporting presents so many concerns, it is understandable that for some, the potential to achieve justice does not outweigh the perceived negative outcomes.

7.2.3.2 Perceptions and past experiences of the police

For some, the conflation of contact with the police and negative outcomes is founded upon a level of past experience which has reinforced this expectation (Barrett, Fletcher and Patel, 2014). For example, one interviewee discussed how they had been a victim of three serious categories of harmful behaviour but felt that the police in these cases had not taken the incidents particularly seriously. A combination of the police reaction, and his understanding of wider perceptions of his transactional sexual behaviours meant that he was unlikely to seek any future support:

I have very little faith in the police in doing anything about it, because I've actually suffered assaults sexual and physical while I've been in (place name) and the police just aren't interested. They say they are but when you actually get down to this has happened,

they're like 'oh but that doesn't matter. Oh, but your phone was only £170, that's a low-cost theft from person'. Even though it's on the CCTV and they've shown me that footage, they're saying 'it doesn't matter'. So, all of these things from my personal experience, when I'm working a job that's not understood by society, that's not recognised properly by society, why would I then try to get more assistance?

Harrison (Sex working participant)

The impact of this individual's past experience on his ongoing perception of the value of policing is clear, and coupled with his recognition of society's perception of sex work, has left him in the mindset that the police are unable to help him should he face further harmful behaviours. The impact of an inadequate response to the initial report was also highlighted by Louise, who discusses an incident involving a female sex worker engaged with her service. In this incident, the police not only failed to adequately respond to the incident at hand, but also criminalised the woman for her past offences:

We had an issue with a girl right who was assaulted really badly. The support worker took her to see the police, the police specialist worker was with her, great. They got her then to the bloody sergeant. He recognised her name and he did her for drug possession. And you just said this woman has been assaulted and you wonder why those people don't come forward? It's absolutely ridiculous. I just think, again, this is where that attitude of stigma against that woman played out. It was nothing to do with what happened, if that was me coming in off the street, I would have been dealt with appropriately. It was the fact that they knew who she was, they knew her background and she was dealt with really differently.

Louise (Practitioner)

The fear of criminalisation as a barrier to reporting victimisation was highlighted previously within this chapter, and it is experiences such as those presented by Louise which are shared with friends, other sex workers and others, eventually informing the perception that reporting may tempt negative consequences for the individual.

Within this, not only was the individual criminalised, but their initial complaint was not dealt with. An individual who perceives the police as unwilling, or unable to deal with their complaint is unlikely to seek their help in the first place. William highlights an experience

which may have led him to question the effectiveness of the police, within which he was also in trouble with the police himself:

I got arrested for the second time of my life for something really minor and I ended up in the police station. 20 cops I counted them all, in this fucking area on the phones, chatting away. Good for them, they've got their cheque coming in, they have an easy life. And there's apparently a cut back on police. There's no police? I've just counted 20 doing fuck all.

William (Sex working participant)

From these narratives, it is clear that previous experience with the police has a profound impact on the way in which the men interact with the police. Like William, many individuals' main experiences of policing activity relate to incidents in which they were dealt with by the police because of their own behaviours. Police officer 2 discusses how this may impact the trust that many individuals have in the police:

Then they have trust issues that this is the police, and 'it's only two minutes ago that the old bill were locking us up as sex workers and trying to charge us with solicitation on the street and raiding brothels where we are working'.

Police officer 2

For some, levels of engagement with the police may be disproportionate to the rest of society. Yvonne highlights how this was common for the men engaged with her service, bridging the divide between perpetrator and victim in a way which influences the relationship between them and the police:

We are often working with people who have been perpetrators, not just the victim. There's probably an additional level of the people who locked you up are also supposed to be the ones who save you, there's that interesting discourse for some of the men.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

Interestingly, Yvonne highlights how this may impact the men's belief that the police can be a positive agency who are there to protect them from harm. Frequent contact with the police regarding their own behaviour can leave an individual feeling as though the police are limited to representing a negative feature in their lives (Sindall, McCarthy and Brunton-Smith, 2017). One interviewee highlighted his relationship with the police:

I feel that (place name 1) police for example always hated me because they were getting calls all the time for me. But then coming to (place name 2) I feel like it's a lot easier in a way.

Mason (Sex working participant)

In this extract, Mason highlights how the frequency of the calls about him impacted the police in his original area's perception of him. Having the belief that the police 'hated' him could potentially impact his trust that the police would help support him if required, leaving him less likely to report his experiences. Police officer 1 also discusses the victim-perpetrator dichotomy from a police perspective, highlighting the difficulty of the police dealing with the same people in these dual roles. Importantly, there is an acknowledgement that there are improvements required in this area of policing:

We're a little bit more educated than we were in relation to sex workers. I think some people's attitudes still need to change a little, there's slight improvement and engagement but again, when we're looking at our street sex workers, the same ones that we deal with for shoplifting, same ones that we deal with issues of premises, issues in the streets, so they get to see them as perpetrators as well as victims. And it's difficult sometimes then to turn that around, that they are now the victim of an incident.

Police officer 1

This intersection of identities may mean that, for some men, their contacts with the police were more often underlined with concerns of their criminal behaviours outside of sex work, rather than their own experiences of harm or vulnerability. These men had discussed their use of substances, periodic homelessness and their arrest for criminal behaviours. Mason in particular had discussed how he had felt as though the police in his area did not take kindly to him as

they had responded to concerns of his behaviour a number of times. Similarly, from a police perspective, police officer 1's above discussion highlights how there is some difficulty in adjusting the mindset to deal appropriately with individuals as a victim where they are commonly dealt with for their own behaviour. Whilst the police should treat the victimisation of all individuals appropriately, regardless of their previous contact with the police, these previous interactions shape their perception of an individual in a way similar to how the men's perception of the police is influenced. The dichotomous relationship between the identities of victim and perpetrator may render these men a subject of deviance as opposed to vulnerability in the view of the police, and the police as a negative force in the view of the men (see Daigle and Muftić, 2016).

Although past experiences such as Mason's may leave an individual reluctant to report, and despite the difficulties from a policing perspective, this is not to say that the perpetrator – victim discourse is an insurmountable barrier:

Absolutely, I think that's been the barrier in the past and I mean for some people that we support it might be that they maybe have offended and they maybe have been arrested by that police officer at some time so that's also a barrier. But that doesn't mean to say that they are not human, and you can't engage, and you can't disclose, and you will be listened to and not judged.

Angela (Practitioner)

The issue here is ensuring that these sorts of messages are received by those who may need them most, and also that there is a degree of consistency in the way that this is managed by the police. Support service practitioners may be able to relay this to their clients, supporting the police in developing improved relationships. This may be more difficult in cases where the individual is not engaged with support services nor the police, though it is clear that it is important that when the police do engage with an individual, that engagement is made to count.

7.2.3.3 Wariness of authority

For those who have been in trouble with the police, or those who believe that their behaviours are in conflict with the law, there is often a wariness of authority which sees them avoid all contact with the police and other bodies, as far as is possible (Fernandez, 2016). For example,

Yvonne highlights how some of the men who engage with her service understand the importance of reporting certain issues but are reluctant to do so themselves, preferring not to be involved with agencies with authority:

It's interesting, because lots of the men have done this before now, it's an interesting relationship. I get people asking to speak to me and they will tell me there is a young lad out working, I think there is a want to safeguard them themselves, they wouldn't ring the police or social services with that though, particularly over the summer we get that over the summer holidays and stuff. We'll get 'there's a lad down there and no way is he old enough, I'm not ringing the police, but I want to tell you.' I suppose that they feel that have done their duty, they have told us.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

With any figure of authority, there are factors which set them apart from the general public. Indeed, society has ways of distinguishing between those in a position of power and those who are not, and much of this is done through a visual confirmation of power (De Camargo, 2016). For example, judges and their robes and wigs, the gold chains adorned by town mayors, and perhaps most widely recognised, the uniforms worn by police officers:

We found when we were visiting somewhere, and we could go visit a brothel, with one of our DLOs, what we call a designated liaison officer. And we would always ask them to be plain clothed and actually it works. So, one of the barriers for them engaging with the police was the uniform. When the police are coming out with us or we're going out with the police we normally request that they are plain clothed, it works. It's almost like people will engage with them on a human being level rather than an authoritative figure.

Angela (Practitioner)

Here Angela highlights how that once a human connection is made between the police and the men that she works with, they are able to better engage because the individual is able to see past the uniform that they are wearing, and the power that this represents. Although the uniform is, for the most part, a prerequisite to policing, this perhaps suggests the value of the police

presenting in some situations in a way which allows them to more easily be identified as fellow members of the wider community.

7.2.3.4 Negative perceptions

Whilst ongoing good relations with the police can go some way in repairing the damage done by previous negative interaction, it has been made clear within this chapter that the impact of any previous negative interaction is profound, and perhaps more strongly weighted than any positive experience in the development of perception. Nathan highlights how historical policing approaches which have not treated violence against sex workers seriously have influenced the current relationship between sex workers and the police:

I'm not sure people doing this fully value the police and maybe have reason to... it has in the past been easy to dismiss assaults on sex workers as occupational hazards almost, and it takes time for some to get out of that mind set.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

Similarly, police officer 2 discusses how historical approaches to policing sex work and sex between men impact relationships and trust between the groups in present day:

That would resonate both within heterosexual sex work community and the gay sex community. If you think back 20/30 years when we still had offences of gross indecency, outraging public decency, that were being prosecuted much more prevalently than they were towards the end of that era of legislation. The police were taking a stronger enforcement approach to many aspects of sex work and sexual conduct. Not just sex work but the publication of adult magazines and literature, offences of indecent imagery, and you had the Vice squads of police forces around the U.K. The clue is in the title, this is about vice, this wasn't about sex work, this wasn't about modern sexual libertarianism it was about, this is a vice, vice is a vice and we are going to police it, we are going to enforce laws to maintain a (small c) conservative culture. The interactions between police forces and sex workers were very much about, we are the police, and we are here to carry out enforcement action against you. I can remember as a very new cop having a conversation with an experienced supervisor in a CID department where an allegation

had come in of a rape of a sex worker and there was a conversation that went on about ‘actually should this be crimed as a rape of a sex worker or should it be about making off without payment?’ That was the culture, there was a kind of ambivalence. ‘This is one of the things associated with this profession, if you want to call it a profession, that’s going to happen, and if you don’t want these things to happen then don’t be involved in that profession.’ Thank goodness we have moved forward in the last 20/30 years, to a position now where there is a much greater understanding of the vulnerability of sex workers and we are slowly changing the attitude of sex workers towards the police. But there is still a legacy of individual sex workers, but also organisations which represent them calling upon the narrative of things that went on historically. Individual cases where officers or forces get things wrong now are very much pointed to and indicated to say, ‘you’ve said that you’ve changed, but look here’s an example of where you’re still doing what you did 20 years ago’.

Police officer 2

So, we’d say that we were going out there to do safety or welfare visits and the narrative from other protagonists in this environment is the police are carrying out raids. That comes from the legacy of a policing culture from 20/30 years ago, late 20th century policing. If you overlay the history of policing of the gay community in the latter half of the 20th century, it further distances and causes blockages between policing and the community. Things are moving forward but building that trust and confidence with sex working communities is going to take a long time.

Police officer 2

Reiner’s (1992) seminal work on the political elements of policing in England and Wales highlights the masculine nature of police culture. Indeed, this has been reflected in more recent work with Loftus (2008) highlighting the outward subjugation of feminised identities within the police. If such a culture has informed the ways in which the police have historically approached both sex work and non-heteronormativity, then it is clear that there is to be a lasting impact on how the police are perceived by such groups. Both Nathan and police officer 2 recognise this, discussing the lasting impact of historical approaches to policing sex work and the culture which has shaped delivery, with the latter developing this point to include the

policing of wider sexuality. Perceptions of the police are often informed by these historical approaches and what is known about police culture (Stardust *et al.*, 2021), and it is clear from the participants narrative that it takes time to adapt to newer approaches to policing. Whilst the most recent NPCC guidance related to sex work both acknowledges the complexity of the sex industry and calls for a police starting position which emphasises sex worker safety (Vajzovic, 2019), police culture and its legacy does have the potential to minimise the impact of such efforts.

Importantly, negative experiences or perceptions of policing were not only discussed as raising barriers to reporting to the police, but also to engagement with and reporting to support services, if they are perceived to work closely with the police. For example, Rebecca highlighted the difficulty of managing working with the police where there is such a mistrust:

So, part of our work is that we do work with the police. And that is something that we have to really carefully manage, because there is massive mistrust between police and sex workers. And part of our job is to try and build that confidence. But that requires police to change their practice. And then for that information to be disseminated. It will take years for somebody that's had one bad experience. And then it's how do we get those good stories out? You know, we say to people, if you want to report to police, we can help you to do that. That's really hard, because we have got no guarantee that they're going to get a good response, they'll have a good experience. So, we do offer it. But I always found that really difficult to do because I could not guarantee you know, the police, it's the police, you would think that I should be able to guarantee that, it's an authoritative organization, disciplined organisation. For me, I think it's really bad that we can't guarantee that.

Rebecca (Practitioner)

The mistrust and negative perception of the police apparent for some sex workers may pose particular barriers for services such as NUM, whose work is most closely aligned with policing activity. Louise picked up on this during her interview:

We do Ugly Mugs in (place name). All of the workers that go out on the van for example are trained in National ugly Mugs. It's something we always make them aware of, that

they can do it. And then it's about framing it saying, 'look okay, you don't think you want to do this, but you know, this could pop up again next week, if we know its him, we could...'. It's hard though because they don't like the Police, they don't trust a thing the Police do.

Louise (Practitioner)

Would you say that the element of not trusting the Police impacts the relationship with NUM?

Jordan (Researcher)

It obviously does doesn't it? I think it does. We do have some in (place name), we have a fairly good number coming through. But they see everyone as one they don't understand, these are a separate issue, the Police are there. They just see the whole reporting thing as the Police. 'They're going to come down, they're going to ask me questions. I'm not speaking to them', you know. They can't distinguish (between services) as much as we can.

Louise (Practitioner)

Often, it is support services who are best placed to explain the benefits of NUM to the men that they are engaged with. Many of the support services active in England and Wales are registered with NUM (Bryce *et al.*, 2015), and some have received training on how to capture reports and feed these into NUM. However, many areas of England and Wales do not have any sex work services who support men, or are targeted at men:

We've talked about stigma, we've talked about inappropriate responses from police officers, talked about masculinity, you know, it's all there. And also, where are these services for men? (Redacted) we know that these services don't exist. They exist in pockets... there's going to be huge gaps. So, when we're looking at, if we do promote to male sex industry workers, we have to build in some casework support ourselves, because you get somebody who reports from some place somewhere and there's not a service for 50 miles, or there is a service, but it's not appropriate.

The role of services in encouraging reporting has been made clear within this study, with Yvonne discussing how many of the men who engage with her service may not think to report without this encouragement. With gaps in service provision nationally, many men may not receive the support that they require, the education of NUMs services which often drive reports or the encouragement that highlights the wrongdoing of others and seeks to pursue a resolution for that individual.

7.2.3.5 Policing approaches

Approaches to policing sex work take many different forms throughout England and Wales (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2016). Police forces, governed by a legal framework which criminalises some behaviours associated with sex work, attempt to adapt approaches which are both reflective of sex work in their communities and respond to any related community concern (see Home Office, 2011). The policing approach can be highly impactful on the way in which sex workers interact with forces. This has been demonstrated by both the Merseyside hate crime model (see Campbell, 2016) and in the Leeds Holbeck area (see Sanders and Sehmbi, 2015), where there were increased levels of reporting and cooperation in police investigations, driven by policing approaches which were primarily concerned with ensuring the safety of sex workers and demonstrating the willingness of the police to respond appropriately to crime against them. Within the sample there were a number of approaches to policing evident, and it was clear that each approach had its different impact on the barriers to reporting. For example, Ryan discussed how within the area he was working he felt able to approach the police about sex work related matters:

Back when I did it there was really no issue, you could go up to them and say ‘look, this has happened’. Where I were doing it, we had a lot of brothels anyway, so they were used to working with sex workers, but I lived in the big main sex worker area and community anyway, so they were already aware of certain things happening.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

He went on to explain how the approach taken by the police helped him and the other sex workers in their area feel comfortable in approaching them for support:

They wouldn't step in to arrest someone, but they would take a basic report, and just let you crack on. Probably since then it has dropped off a lot, people don't want to go to the police because they feel that they are going to be in trouble for doing it which is still an issue, you're not going to be in trouble for it they are going to take your report and they will try and deal with it.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

In this area, the police approach seemingly focused on the safety of sex workers, rather than policing the criminal behaviours associated with sex work. In Ryan's case, the knowledge that he would not get in to trouble for his sex work meant that he felt able to approach the police, though he does acknowledge that for some there is still a feeling of unease. The knowledge that the police were focused on the safety of those involved in sex work, rather than criminalising sex work, was also discussed by one participant as key to encouraging his communication with the police:

Yes, because if it's not illegal I'm not doing any crime, so for me to talk to the police its fine. It's a good relationship, I'm not doing any illegal crime. I know it and they know it. they told me it's not illegal, but please if you start to steal it is different. You can do it, but you have to behave, you can't be a criminal.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

The participant discusses his behaviours as not being illegal despite his work being primarily based on-street, and potentially falling foul of soliciting and loitering legislation. It is clear that the police have discussed with him that he would not be criminalised for his sex work, as long as he did not engage in other criminal behaviours, such as theft. In the area in which this individual worked, the approach by the police was described by another interview participant:

I think the police are quite good with the street work in (location name), and I think the guy who I mentioned...he says that the police come around a lot and just check you're safe. They know what you are doing, but it's fine. They're not trying to stop anyone doing anything, but they'll just keep checking to make sure you're safe.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

In another force area, a practitioner described a similar approach to policing sex work, where the police are interested in their safety first and foremost, whilst also balancing the concerns of the local community:

So, the police are well aware of our cruising sites. They're well aware of them, and they're well aware of many, many of the brothels operating. And they're tolerant to that as long as they feel that there's no coercion or exploitation within those establishments, then they won't be arrested, and they won't be moved on. And if there were complaints by the neighbours or something like that, they will try to work with them to see right what the best is, but it's not as I know it is in other places. It's a real tolerance. And I think it needs to be across the board. Because we can keep people safer if we know where people are.

Angela (Practitioner)

Interesting within this extract is the practitioner's observation that such an approach would be beneficial 'across the board'. The issue is that the approach to sex work is inconsistent across force areas and the type of relationship which builds trust in some cases is not replicated nationwide. One practitioner discussed the national picture of policing sex work, unpicking some of the issues which have led to the inconsistent approaches:

You have the National Police guidelines. But they're not accredited. So, they are guidelines. But I think there needs to be a whole program (of work)... We've worked with police for many, many years. And the issue we have is there are 43 different police forces, and they're all working really differently. People get such different responses not only within different forces, but within different officers within those forces. And there is no training program, if there was a training program, then police officers, when they do respond to sex workers wouldn't have to rely on their own moral judgment. They would have something really clear around what the sex industry is. Yeah, and they wouldn't have to ask those questions or make judgements. And I think that's where we want to provide that community education.

Rebecca (Practitioner)

This was also echoed by the police participants, who both recognise the variance in approach between different force areas:

It's national guidance, it's not set in stone. Each area is different, as I say, and each policing area has its own...you know, one thing doesn't fit all unfortunately, and people have to find their own way.

Police officer 1

There are different forces around the country, all of which have slightly different priorities, slightly different approaches. The knowledge of the frontline about the guidance is incomplete, so there is more work for policing to do to make sure that a greater proportion of our workforce understand what the advice is and take heed to that.

Police officer 2

The varying response to sex work means that whilst in some force areas there is seemingly promising practice, where sex workers are not actively criminalised and efforts are made to build trusting relationships between the police and sex working communities, other force areas have adopted tougher approaches which are designed to support sex workers in a more forceful manner. These such approaches were discussed within the interviews, with participants indicating the potential damage that can be done to the trust and co-operation between police and sex workers:

So, the chief of police now said 'do you know what, I'm getting them all off the streets. Any of those girls work on the street they're going to be slapped with a..' We went what the 'hell are you doing, we've got some really good work going on, we've got the van out there'. The police officer that sits on the van in plain clothes, she was finally getting somewhere with the girls they were reporting violent incidents to her now she has been taken off. So, all of a sudden, these bloody girls were out in the street now, but the Police officer has come and slapped them with this fine. And the worst thing was they were told that they have to go to the (project name removed) project, or they would have a criminal record. And we just went 'you are going back 100 years. Literally you are going back 100 years.'

Louise (Practitioner)

Discussing the same police operation, another practitioner highlighted how such an approach, which criminalises sex workers and seeks to move them on from a particular area can separate them from the support networks which they have developed:

(Street name removed) is just, you know, it's where it all happens. You're in the centre of the city, you got easy access to anything. In a deprived area, like I used to deliver awareness training with the police for county lines, and I was saying about (street name), you know, you got the train station, it comes right into the city centre, right in the train station and walk out onto the street to the sex work industry. You're in the centre, city centre, where it all happens. So that's why there's such a bad rap. But then, you know, when they have on this crackdown with Operation (operation name removed), they've moved to another area. It's moved them away from the links that they had with the support services right, the support services do the outreach now on (street name removed) and nobody's there. It's like where are they? Who's making sure they're safe? Who's giving them condoms? Who's making sure that they got clean injecting equipment? Who's checking in that they hadn't been assaulted? You know, it's just like, that support, you know.

Marcus (Practitioner)

The separation from support networks such as services and other workers in the area, and the threat of criminalisation by the police, reduces the likelihood of reporting through both the formal reporting channels, and the less formal secondary reporting often done through service provision. There are also consequences for the more general support required by some sex workers, such as those highlighted within the second extract. Policing approaches such as this may serve not only to create barriers to accessing their services, but also to increase the vulnerability faced by some sex workers.

7.2.4 The individual and internalised barriers to reporting

As discussed previously within this chapter, both the environment within which these men live their lives and the authoritative systems which govern their behaviour, have a profound impact

on the individual themselves. This influence is clear within the narrative of the men involved in the study, with their discussions touching on the need to remain anonymous, the influence of their own lifestyle on their likelihood to report and the impact of approaches which have considered violence against sex workers to be an occupational hazard. This section considers these more internal barriers, influenced by the world around the individual but ultimately relating to their own reaction to these conditions.

7.2.4.1 Anonymity and confidentiality

The ‘fear of being outed for exchanging sex’ was amongst the factors most strongly believed to be a barrier to reporting, by the survey participants. Indeed, the wishes of sex workers to maintain their own anonymity and hide their status as a sex worker has been discussed throughout the existing literature (see Mclean, 2013). Despite the conditions which make anonymity important for the men within this study being mainly environmental, ultimately it is the preservation of self which prevents reporting. It is clear that for the men, pursuing support and justice from the police means choosing between that and protecting their identity, and the work which they were engaged with:

Going to the police would have involved outing myself if that happened to me.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

Ok, so a friend of mine, she was a sex worker, was blackmailed by her partner. The criminal justice system kept her identity anonymous throughout the whole of the court case, but I don’t think I would have known that when I was doing sex work. I think that’s only something you find out when you go and report the crime and I think we wouldn’t have reported that crime. Take the rape that happened, we had no idea that anonymity would have been available to us.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

A big issue is anonymity, most of us are hiding this from someone unless we are out open porn stars - there are a few. We have to protect our civilian life more than report crime.... sad really.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

Police officer 2 develops this discussion, highlighting how it is not only their own privacy and confidentiality at stake, but also in some instances their clients. Importantly, they raise the issue of trust and the idea that coming forward may involve outing themselves and the work that they are doing, as previously highlighted by Kurtis and Nathan:

So, in general, it starts from trust. Sex workers by the very nature of the work that they do, they have privacy and confidentiality of their clients, privacy and confidentiality of themselves because some are not out and open as sex workers and their friends and families may not know what they are doing. They're worried straight away, 'if I report this is it going to come out in the public domain that I am a sex worker?' and all of the stigma that's associated with that.

Police officer 2

Important within police officer 2's discussion here is their acknowledgement of the sex work related stigma which often drives the need for sex workers to remain anonymous (Cusick and Berney, 2005). There were, however, examples within the study of those who yielded their anonymity and disclosed their transactional sexual activity. Nathan highlights above that some sections of the male sex work industry may be more open to doing so, using porn performers as an example. Ryan provides another example of this, having told the police that he was sex working so that this could be considered should he be injured whilst working. Whilst this led to a positive working relationship in Ryan's case, this type of approach is at odds to that of many of those engaged with the industry and was certainly an outlier within this study. The men within this study were clear that for them reporting an incident meant sacrificing their anonymity and potentially disclosing their working practices, suggesting that for them, the importance of this element of self-preservation was deemed to outweigh that of reporting their experiences. In reporting violence, or otherwise harmful behaviour, the men face a negotiation between maintaining their anonymity and potentially exposing themselves to the stigma related to a sex work identity, imposed by the perceptions of outside observers. Despite this being discussed here as internalised and an act of self-preservation, it is the social environment which ultimately influences the need for an individual to maintain their anonymity whilst sex working. Whilst male sex workers management of identity has been noted in previous studies

(see Kujar and Pajnik, 2018; Oselin, 2018), this has not been in consideration for how this may impact the ways in which men interact with the police and other reporting systems.

7.2.4.2 Lifestyle and the trivialisation of harm

Whilst the motivations for the men in this study preserving their anonymity was most frequently related to the stigma associated with sex work, other elements of an individual's lifestyle may mean that their involvement with the police is not desirable. Substance misuse has been touted as frequently associated with sex work, although Ellison and Weitzer (2017) highlight that this is more common within female sex work. Ellison (2017) later highlights a range of behaviours associated with the men in his study, including drug dealing, scams involving clients and selling stolen goods, which may render many unwilling to become involved at any level with the police. Whilst there were minor discussions of scams and substance use within the sample of this research, these were rather limited. Substance use was discussed by two of the men interviewed, and intoxication for one of them had led to their arrest and imprisonment for criminal damage however. Lorenzo discusses how a lifestyle which features substance misuse may influence an individual's relationship with the police:

Most of them, male or female, they are on drugs. They have problems with the law, they don't go to the police and they don't want to be a sex worker. They don't want to know anything about the police, I am not afraid to go to the police because I don't take drugs. They know it and they know me. The other people have trouble with the law.

Lorenzo (Sex working participant)

For an individual who habitually uses substances there is the additional concern that this factor of their lifestyle could influence the police and other agencies perception of them, and impact as a result, the response that they receive. The societal stigma of substance misusing behaviours and addiction, and the internalised recognition of these external perceptions of their behaviour have been recognised as barriers to seeking support for these issues (Hammarlund *et al.*, 2018), and it is possible that it is this very same stigma, combined with the intersection between sex working and subordinate masculine identities, which influences the help-seeking behaviours of some male sex workers.

Often associated with substance misuse and addiction, is a disorganised lifestyle in which contact with the police is frequent for both the individual's behaviours and their

experiences (Davies *et al.*, 2015). Whilst substance misuse was not a factor for all of the men involved in this study, for those who it was, experience of contact with the police was more frequently discussed.

Within this the men tended to downplay the severity of the incidents, and the practitioners describing the experiences of service users also highlighted how the men trivialised these experiences. Stanko and Hobdell (1993) discuss how some men minimise their experiences of harm in order to deal with them, and in this study it was clear that some had presented a warped perspective of what is acceptable behaviour. For example, one individual discussed having substances administered without his knowledge, and his experiences of other forms of harmful behaviour within a public sex setting:

But then I've been found again in the (public sex setting), a lot of people have told me that when I have been drinking, people have been taking my money, and doing sort of things and I'm like wow, really? Kind of like risky behaviour, things I'm not aware of. I know for example one time I remember somebody messing around at the back of me, and I presume he has put something inside me. You know poppers? I love poppers but there was one bottle and I remember him; it was in his mouth and then he was grabbing me and like kissed me and I don't know. I presumed it was poppers but then you wake up. I had people take things from me, even underwear and stuff. I've walked out of the (public sex setting) once just in a vest, even fell in the water. Luckily there was a barge there. It's just silly high-risk stuff.

Mason (Sex working participant)

This individual had described several incidents within this extract, and also throughout the interview, though there was an air of nonchalance to the discussion. These events had happened to him, however he presented as though he was not overly concerned nor effected by them. This of course may have been an element of self-preservation in itself, a coping strategy which maintains masculinity and invulnerability. Although he could not negotiate the fact that these incidents had occurred, he was able to control his own response to them in a way which managed the projection of the impression of his ongoing vulnerability.

Similarly, there were suggestions that for many individuals who faced frequent victimisation, reporting was not a consideration. Practitioner Yvonne discussed this in detail:

The men that we work with, not often but relatively frequently report incidents, quite serious incidents of violence. They don't tell you that because they want anything done about it, they tell you that like you might tell them you went to the pub last night and tried a nice beer. Not like I need some support with this, it's just like that's what happened and without us having the conversation and highlighting it they would have just continued on as normal. They might still do that anyway, I might say to them you can do this, this and this about that and they might still not choose to. Quite a few people will certainly do a NUM alert, and some might speak to the police actually. Some of them would, but I think that's because it wouldn't have come to their mind without me suggesting it, it wouldn't have crossed their mind. I hate using it, when people say that, its bound around loads but I think it's still the perception that its part of sex work.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

Within this, Yvonne highlights how some discussions of victimisation were presented as mundane conversation by the men who came into contact with her service, and that without the support and encouragement from services many incidents would go unreported simply because this is not something that their service users think to do. Police officer 1 picked up on this point, highlighting how sex workers may not report unless the incident is particularly serious:

You know, they're quite tough skinned. They wouldn't report things as a norm, unless it's something really serious or something that's bugging or concerning them. And, normally, they would go to a service and disclose to somebody in a service before.

Police officer 1

Police officer 1's presentation of sex workers as being thick skinned may be interpreted as some level of expectation of experiences of harmful behaviour. Historically harmful behaviours have been discussed as an occupation hazard within the sex industry (see Sanders, 2004), and this approach to harm within sex work was reflected in both Elliot and Louise's narrative:

I think harmful behaviour is just a going concern, isn't it? It's just like a fairly regular thing that people are going to experience.

Elliot (Practitioner)

'So, you mentioned that it's kind of like the occupational hazard. Do you think that presents a barrier to reporting as well, because they don't see it's serious?'

Jordan (Researcher)

Yeah and they'd be in the police every week. Because it happens so often, they'd be like 'well I will be up in the police station every bloody Monday and Thursday night'. And you know what it's like, three hours. You're still sitting there. There's no way it's going to happen.

Louise (Practitioner)

Interestingly, none of the men within the study referred to violence or otherwise harmful behaviour as something that they expect or see as being intrinsically linked with the job directly, though all were aware of the dangers and presented strategies for ensuring their own safety. However, it is clear from the perspective of practitioners that many men coming into contact with services are experiencing frequent victimisation and are normalising it as an occupational hazard, or perhaps trivialising their experiences. If the expectation is that men engaged with transactional sex will experience some form of the behaviours outlined within this study as part of their working lives, then the likelihood of them being reported when experienced is significantly reduced.

Yvonne's narrative, presented earlier within this section, highlights the significance of practitioners discussing what is acceptable behaviour with men who become involved with services, though there is a whole cohort of individuals who are not engaged with services who may be experiencing a similar level of acceptance of harm, fuelled by the narrative that harmful behaviour is an occupational hazard of sex work. Reversing this narrative has been and remains a long and arduous process, as Nathan highlighted:

It has in the past been easy to dismiss assaults on sex workers as occupational hazards almost, and it takes time for some to get out of that mind set.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

Such a shift in perception would take time, but importantly requires a commitment from the police, the wider criminal justice system and support service practitioners to reinforce the narrative that those engaged with transactional sex or sex work should not simply accept harmful behaviours as a feature of the activities that they are engaged in.

7.3 Improving barriers to reporting

As well as offering some perspective as to what the barriers to reporting are for male sex workers, those involved in this study have also provided some insight as to how levels of reporting can potentially be improved going forwards. The discussions within the interviews have highlighted the means and the sentiments which the participants believe would improve levels of trust and shape future relationships between the police and sex work communities, reflecting the environmental, authority related and internalised barriers outlined within this chapter.

7.3.1 Reassuring anonymity concerns

Tolsma, Blaauw and Grotenhuis (2012) highlight the availability of anonymous reporting as improving the likelihood of a victim coming forward, in their Dutch study of reporting behaviours. Similarly, Chakraborti and Hardy (2015) discuss how victims of hate crime would be more likely to report these experiences if they were able to remain anonymous. Both Nathan and Kurtis, within this study, highlighted the guarantee of anonymity for a sex worker who comes forward to report a form of harmful behaviour as a positive step towards improving the number of men who do come forwards. Nathan was brief in his explanation of how anonymity could improve reporting, however he does also raise an interesting point around how figures of authority can be seen as patronising by sex workers:

Guarantee anonymity would be a big step. None of us like to think we are victims but sometimes government bodies and public services can be a bit patronising to people that just have a different career choice.

Nathan (Sex working participant)

Kurtis described in more detail how he felt that many like himself are unaware that a guarantee of anonymity is a possibility:

Ok, so a friend of mine, she was a sex worker, was blackmailed by her partner. The criminal justice system kept her identity anonymous throughout the whole of the court case, but I don't think I would have known that when I was doing sex work. I think that's only something you find out when you go and report the crime and I think we wouldn't have reported that crime. Take the rape that happened, we had no idea that anonymity would have been available to us.

Kurtis (Sex working participant)

The availability of anonymity may well have helped Kurtis' friend continue with their engagement with the criminal justice process, though as Kurtis highlights, this may only become known once initial contact with the police has been made. There still remains the issue of overcoming the initial barrier, though if more sex workers were aware that there was a way in which they could both maintain their anonymity and seek justice, reporting may indeed become easier for some.

7.3.2 Developing relationships and supporting individuals

Building a relationship of trust can take time, effort and resources. There have been multiple police initiatives which have set out to provide marginalised communities with a route into police services through specific individuals who act as special point of contacts or designated liaison officers for these groups (see for example Sanders and Sehmbi, 2015). Both Angela and Yvonne discussed their observations of the importance of relationships in encouraging engagement and reporting. Angela discussed the importance of the police presenting within indoor sex work spaces without uniform in order for them to be able to engage with sex workers on a more human level and without barriers, though it is clear from her discussion that this was facilitated by an existing relationship between local police and her support service.

Police officer 2's narrative on this point highlights how it may not be enough for the police to simply ask for the trust of their local sex work communities, but that this is a body of work which will require far more of a directed approach:

I'll take you back to the question about engaging with community, I don't think we're hugely effective at building trust and confidence within our communities by just saying 'trust us, come forward, we'll take the report seriously'. I think that's a small part of it but if I was sat out there in a distrustful position, and the police just said, 'trust me', that wouldn't win me over. I think it is about that proactive outreach before something happens, to say 'look we're here, this is our approach'. I think it's easier to have that message delivered before something happens. In environments, communities, whether that's school or universities, or in communities where people may be engaged in sex work, or e-campaigns, put an advert on Grindr for example and say 'if you've been a victim of this'. So that proactive outreach message that says 'please do report stuff to us, we will treat your report seriously, we're here to listen and be non-judgemental in terms of lifestyle choices or all of those types of things which are of complete irrelevance. Just tell us what has happened, and we will help you and deal with it'. That's the police leading in their own right, but also by building relationships with local organisations across the country, grass roots organisations that are providing that support and may encourage third party reporting, so NUM provides that national framework but there's lots of other organisations at a grass roots level who can provide that linkage.

Police officer 2

Importantly, police officer 2 touches upon the role of third sector organisations such as NUM in supporting the development of relationships between the police and helping encourage reporting. Yvonne also discusses the role of support services here, particularly in supporting service users who do wish to report their experience:

I think personal relationships are important with stuff like that and barriers at operational level. We can say that we will take you to that appointment. There's that thing around being able to offer that personal support, I think it is that, being able to be like 'this is what the building is like, we will go with you'.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

When a victim seeks to report a crime, they are often at their most vulnerable, having experienced some form of harmful behaviour and then trusting the relevant authorities to deal with the matter with care, attention and sensitivity. It may prove difficult for an individual to

trust a stranger in a situation where for them, the stakes are so high. In a scenario where a relationship has already been formed and developed, reporting may seem like less a 'leap of faith', and more a step in the right direction. Initiatives which target the formation of these relationships are key to facilitating an improvement in the accessibility of the police.

7.3.3 Avoiding moral judgements

A significant part of the 'leap of faith' discussed above surrounds the reaction of those to whom a crime is reported. Whether this be a reaction to the sex work context, internal prejudices towards sexual relationships between men or expectations of men being able to protect their own interests, there is some uncertainty as to how the individual will react. Rebecca discusses how the police should avoid the moral judgements which often surround sex work, and should demonstrate that they will respond appropriately to potential reports:

I think people find the sex industry interesting, sensationalist. People read the media about it and get their kind of ideas and perspectives from the media, I think in terms of policing, because police are tasked with dealing with so many diverse populations, that they're never going to be an expert on anything. But they don't have to be an expert on anything, what they have to really do is not have any moral judgments around anything and treat people under their remit as police. So, I think what police sometimes do is 'we have to deal with this. So, we will go and engage with these people'. And it's like, 'no, just let them know what you can do. Just evidence that your responses will be appropriate. And then people know that if they want you, they can access you and create avenues that makes it easy for them to access you'. You know, quite often we get 'oh well they'll have to ring 101 or turn up at the police station'. And it's just like, that's never going to happen. So, as police are you prepared to miss that opportunity, to take a report of a crime about a dangerous perpetrator in that community? Or are you prepared to create a situation where this person feels comfortable to report?

Rebecca (Practitioner)

Societal attitudes to sex work, and societal attitudes to sex needs to change to become much more modern, much more understanding of vulnerability, much more deploring and sanctioning of really really horrible unhealthy viewpoints. I think we also need to

work to build a greater understanding that just because someone is a sex worker it doesn't necessarily define who they are as a person. You've still got a significant amount of stigma in society, and therefore probably in policing, around sex workers. This was in the public domain, in the media, but there was a senior police officer who questioned the validity of the evidence offered by a sex worker by virtue of their profession. This is in the 21st century, and quite rightly they received censure for that commentary, but that is a viewpoint that is expressed by many in society, and we just need to really move forward and recognise that sex work is a form of employment that many people across the U.K are engaged in and it's not necessarily a defining feature of that individual. Rape of a male or a female, is rape of a male or female, it's irrelevant what their employment status is.

Police officer 2

The National Policing Sex Work and Prostitution Guidance (Vajzovic, 2019:4) highlights that 'It is not the role of policing to make moral judgements'. However, as has been discussed above, the actual approach to the policing of sex work is very much dependent on the individual force area. The difficulty is that the environment in which sex work exists not only influences the perception that police officers may hold of sex work, but also the way in which sex workers perceive they will be treated by the police. Therefore, it is important that not only do the police ensure that they are not judgemental in their dealings with male sex workers, but that they communicate their intention to consistently ensure that sex work communities are dealt with in this vein.

7.3.4 Creating safe spaces

A barrier to both reporting and access to services evident within the interview discussion was the accessibility of the service and the provision of a safe space to aid the ease of reporting. Yvonne had highlighted how particular services may be more difficult to access for individuals who may present with substance misuse issues or homelessness. There is a balancing act for services to manage, keeping facilities modern but also welcoming:

I think that is something that is a barrier for lots of other services not just (service name removed) with some of the men that we work with because they might have a homelessness issue and a drug issue, that they don't feel physically like they want to

present in certain spaces. (Service name removed) for example is a lovely office, like a New York loft space, flashy. I feel like a scrubber going in there. If you've got a sleeping bag and you've not had a shower in 3 days you're not going to go through that door. I think there's something around in lots of services, so they end up in homeless day centres and there are other needs there that aren't met by them. With us it's a tricky situation because we want a nice office, but we don't want it to be too nice, it needs to be homely.

Yvonne (Practitioner)

Louise also discussed spaces and the barriers that they may create to reporting, though she focused more closely on services supporting sex workers to report harmful behaviours against them:

Again, for me it's around that, like attitude and stigma so the instant they come through that door it's about the physical location where you are. It's about, it's simple things like you know, where you are meeting somebody, it's got to be clean, tidy, and it looks like you've made it worthwhile for that person to come through the door. You want to be in a stinking little one room off a corridor, you want to be in a really nice clean smart place. You want to make sure that as soon as they open their mouth that you believe them.

Louise (Practitioner)

Whilst Louise's use of the word smart may contradict Yvonne's worry that certain services spaces may seem too elitist for some to want to engage with, her sentiment of providing a safe space in which the individual believes they will be taken seriously is evident. This was echoed by a service using male participating the interview phase, who had thought in detail about how this space would look and what it could offer the sex work community:

After working with a few projects, like (service name removed) and (service name removed) there was one thing that I actually came up with to make it so simple and its open to all sex workers male and female, it's to have a designated building where they can go into. It just looks like a normal building, there don't have to be no signs on the outside, its fully secure, they're going to be safe. They can go in, they can report something safely, they can get themselves sorted and if they need to go home, they can

get them there in one piece. It's that secure network there, if it's raining or too cold, they can go there and get a hot drink and there's going to be no questions asked. But of course, that costs a lot of money to do that, but it would be perfect for that.

Ryan (Sex working participant)

Interestingly, Ryan discusses a service space when asked about how male sex workers could be supported in reporting harmful behaviours against them. Police spaces were not mentioned within this debate by any of those involved, perhaps highlighting how these spaces are not seen as safe by nature, even if they are presented in a way which is intended as such. Although this may present a barrier, there is perhaps an opportunity in which policing can tap into service provision space to take reports, much in the way it has done with hate crime offences through the use of TrueVision.

7.3.5 Legal reassurance and education

Much of what may render a police facility an unsafe space for male sex workers arguably relates to the potential for criminalisation and the perception that the police will deviate from the matter at hand and focus on the behaviour of the victim themselves. The reassurance that the police are interested in criminal behaviours outside of sex work, rather than those within it, was clearly facilitative of Lorenzo's cooperation with the police, for example. In a quote presented earlier in this chapter, he had suggested the police in his area would not interrupt his sex work, as long as he did not participate in any other illegal activity. Despite lacking complete clarity of the legal framework, Lorenzo was reassured by the police's word that they would only criminalise him if he came to their attention for participating in other criminal behaviours. The importance of properly informed victims within a sex work context was also highlighted by practitioner Angela, who highlighted the role of services in supporting male sex workers in understanding that sex work is not, in itself, illegal:

I think part of our work with people is to highlight that sex work is not against the law. And I think sometimes if people are victims of sexual violence, they're sometimes frightened to report because they think that it's an offense that they're doing. And that they would be in trouble. I think it's part of our role, it's important that we educate people, but I think the law is complicated. I think sometimes it can be contradictory in places. I

think it's important that we know the basics enough to educate our people. I think you would be surprised how many people in survival sex or sex work that think that they are committing a criminal offence, I think the numbers would be high.

Angela (Practitioner)

As Angela highlights within this extract, the legal framework surrounding sex work is complicated. Of the 10 survey participants, 9 claimed to be aware that selling sexual services between adults in private was legal. However, the impression from the practitioners within the interviews was that many of their clients are unaware of the legality of their behaviours. This may be reflective of the sampling framework utilised for the survey phase of this research, and perhaps suggests that those who are online facilitated and engaged within the online sex work community are further informed than those who are typically involved with service provision. Services therefore have a role in educating their clients around the legality of sex work.

7.3.6 Shifting perceptions of masculine identity

Whilst the above discussion of improving the reporting experience for male sex workers was angled towards the more short and medium-term solutions, some of the barriers uncovered by this work will require more long-term strategic efforts to shift societal attitudes and expectations of men. As discussed within the literature review, social expectations of gender roles and masculinity have been formed throughout history. Although today's idea of the modern man is some way removed even from the 20th century, many expectations remain prevalent and are often embedded within the societal subconscious. It has been evident throughout that often a barrier to a man seeking support or help when in need, is being male himself. Marcus discussed the stubbornness of men, and also continued to suggest the difficulty of engaging men in service provision:

Obviously being made aware that, you know, you will be listened to and there are services out there certainly does help because there are some services where, you know, men do get supported for whatever reason, so, it obviously works in one respect, but I think that's tough, that's a tough nut to crack because men are just too stubborn. I think, you know, but then you know, the proportion of men and women involved in substance misuse services is highly dominated by men. But again, getting them into the services

takes a lot of work or they've got to a stage where its catastrophic or it's a crunch point where they have to go. I don't have an answer for that one.

Marcus (Practitioner)

Whilst Marcus focuses mainly on the weight of being male and the barriers which this presents within current societal frameworks, he does begin to approach some form of a solution, highlighting though the difficulty caused by just how embedded the issue is. He highlights the importance of services being there, willing to listen and support men. Elliot continued in a similar vein, highlighting the work that services such as he was involved in and research such as this does to 'detoxify the idea of being a man with feelings':

Yeah, I think it's definitely the issue of around of masculinity and wider society. I think it's less of a sex working men thing and more of a men thing, if that makes sense. So I think the main work to be done is the work that society is doing and lots of parts of society are doing to like detoxify the idea of being a man with feelings, you know, I think so all that work that is going on in society that me and you and everyone in this room is doing is the main thing and it's not an easy answer is it but I think that's the main one.

Elliot (Practitioner)

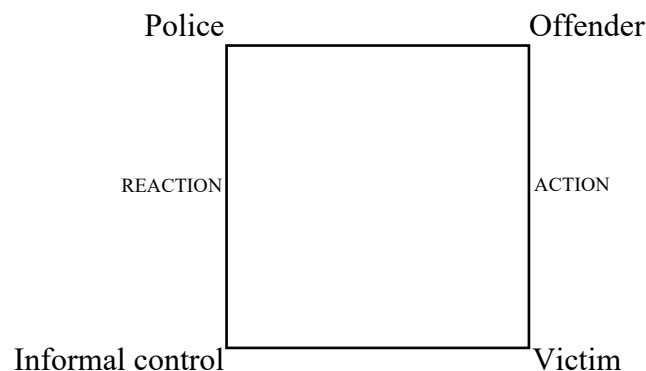
It remains clear that there is no overnight fix for an issue which so widely embedded within social attitudes, though work is being done to open up gateways for men to seek the support that they may at some point need. High profile displays of emotional vulnerability such as actor and television personality Terry Crews, very much an image of the masculine ideal, reporting his sexual victimisation, go some way in raising awareness to the issue and demonstrating an acceptability for male vulnerability. However, there is much importance in the groundwork being done. Regular people like Marcus and Elliot who can listen to men and assure them that there is support available for them and that their experience of harm does not shape them. Services for men play a key part within this, offering an experience designed to be supportive and formed upon an actual understanding of the issues faced by men involved in transactional sex. Whilst the current outlook of service provision may reach pockets of men, there are many who do not seek this support and the lack of services nationally means that for many, there is little to no support available to them. Therefore, there is also is a wider body of work to be

done which both emphasises the acceptability of men seeking support and ensures that there is suitable support in place.

7.4 A conceptual understanding of barriers to reporting

Realist criminology, a critique of traditional criminological approaches which limit their focus on the offender or victim of a criminal act to explain its occurrence, seeks instead to approach crime as a ‘complex social construction’ (Lea, 2016: 60). Young (1987) introduced the square of crime, separating the action and reaction required in order to produce a criminal event. The four points of Young’s square are occupied by the police, informal control, the offender and the victim, and it is these four factors which are argued to interact within an incident of criminal behaviour.

Figure 8: The square of crime presented by Jock Young (1987: 340).



Importantly, Young describes how public opinion and the social environment influence the measures of more formal control which are in place:

‘Public opinion and informal social control have the central role, not only in defining what is crime, but also in maintaining social order. Furthermore, successful police action is very largely dependent on public support.’ (1987: 339)

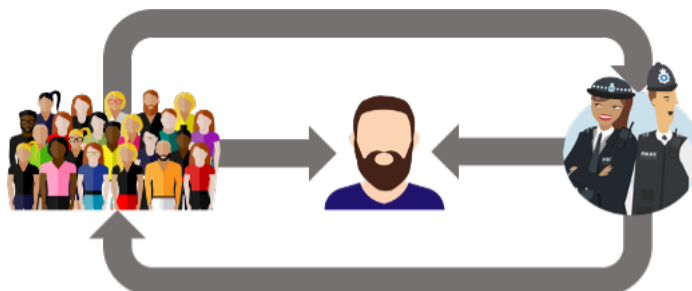
Young goes on to highlight the influence of decision makers in defining the types of behaviours which should be the attention of criminal law, highlighting the reciprocal influences of the bodies of formal and informal control:

‘We see, therefore, how the multiple agencies which react to crime are involved both as definers of what is tolerable and intolerable behaviour and as controllers of the level of deviance.’ (1987: 340)

Whilst Young, and the general direction of Realist Criminology since, has focused on explaining the occurrence of criminal incidents, the factors which make up the square of crime and the interactions between them may go some way in offering an explanation of how barriers to reporting such incidents are formed for the men who took part in this study. Leaning on Young’s identification of the bodies of formal and informal social control within the square of crime, it is possible to better understand barriers to reporting harmful incidents by identifying how these factors and the individual interact in order to influence the decision to report. It is notable that my adaptation of Young’s square of crime considers both criminal and non-criminal but potentially harmful behaviours, and indeed the idea that something is not criminal in itself may be a barrier to reporting. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the formal social control mechanism of the criminal justice system outlines what is criminal, deemed to be harmful and therefore known to be reportable. Young also refers to public opinion, and public perceptions have been reflected in the men’s internalisation of sex work related stigma and expectations of men and masculinities, both discussed as barriers to reporting within this chapter.

In this study, I have described the formal social control as the authority, the informal social control as the environment and those who experience harm as the individual. This tri-partite understanding of how barriers to reporting are formed highlights how the wider social control systems influence both the other and the individual, yet the individual themselves has very little influence over these structural regimes which govern behaviours. Figure 9 provides a visual representation of this tri-partite understanding, within which the individual sits at the centre of a wider socio-cultural framework dictated by laws and social understandings.

Figure 9: A diagram representing the tri-partite understanding of barriers to reporting.



Whilst the victim is presented as one of the corners of Young's equation which seeks to explain how these factors influence the occurrence of crime, the individual sits at the centre of this tripartite understanding. The individual's role within this is presented as more passive, in that their ability to redefine public perceptions, or their chances of reforming legal approaches, are limited. Male sex workers who experience the harmful behaviours listed within this study represent a marginalised figure in terms of what society has considered it means to be both a man, and indeed a member of the accepted wider social collective. Although it may be argued that the influence of the individual is limited in general, it is even more so where marginalised groups such as male sex workers are considered.

The very purpose of deconstructing the issues of crime and barriers to reporting in a way which both this study, and earlier work by Young has done, is to attempt to provide a more encompassing solution to the respective issues. By developing the understanding of each factor in isolation, and also of the way in which they interact with each other in order to influence a victim's decision to report, attempts to address barriers can be more accurately targeted and better prepared. For example, the barriers driven by the environment in which these men transact sex and negotiate their masculine identities have been formed throughout the historical context outlined in chapter 2. Whilst more contemporary attitudes in England and Wales may be more tolerant of non-heteronormative relationships and a variance in masculine identities, there remains a lingering hostility to both which slows the progress to remedying the barriers driven by these attitudes. There also remain questions over the legitimacy afforded to sex work, and the characterisation of the male role within it, which were clear within the narrative of those involved in this work. A solution to such deeply engrained societal perception and moral influence would likely require a long term and wide-reaching collective effort, which aims to shift these understandings to become more inclusive of these currently othered identities.

Whilst the above understanding of the environmental barriers suggests that long-term solutions are required, barriers that relate to the authority may be better described as requiring medium-term solutions. Although the law and its focus are intrinsically linked to and legitimised by public opinion, the authority of the state and state actors are able to set the precedent for how the wider social environment perceives an issue, through the application of a legal response to an issue. Many of the barriers to reporting presented within this study relate to the legal framework and the police application of it. A shift in legal understanding which no longer criminalises the behaviours of either the client nor sex worker, within a consensual transaction between adults 18 years old or older, would go some way in opening up the

possibility of a more open dialogue between male sex workers and the police. As would the implementation of policing approaches which do not employ heavy handed enforcement tactics which disrupt, displace or disengage those who sell sexual services. Whilst changing law, and indeed local policy, may be an arduous process, the response to these types of issue can take effect far quicker than those related to the environment. Such efforts may indeed also set in motion the changes in attitude which contribute to the context in which the men in this study live their lives.

Barriers related to the internalisation of the above by the individual are less strictly defined and may perhaps be interpreted to be caused by one or both of the above factors. Indeed, to simply label the individual as a barrier themselves may seem to problematise their own character, and this is certainly not my intention. This discussion of the individual rather relates to their reaction to the wider world around them and the authority which governs it. For example, as described earlier in this chapter, the offer of anonymity within the criminal justice process may go some way in encouraging and ensuring ongoing cooperation with the police for those who have concerns about others finding out about their sex work. Similarly, support services reinforcing messages around acceptable behaviour and their encouragement in reporting any wrongdoing, may go some way in supporting any attempts from the more formal social control systems to identify harmful and criminal behaviours. Such efforts can be implemented in a comparatively short-term time frame, as they involve the actions of individual agencies rather than the systemic change required for the authority and environment led barriers discussed above.

Although both the barriers and the framework within which they have been understood in this research have focused primarily on a sex work or transactional sex context, this framework of understanding may also be applied to other stigmatised and marginalised communities and populations, therefore this study contributes to criminological theory which seeks to explain responses to experiences of crime. The narratives of the men within this study did not only represent their association with sex work, but also their intersections of race, socio-economic status, sexuality, deviance and life experience. Whilst sex work does present its own specific challenges and barriers, it is certainly not the only factor which meant that, for the most part, the men involved in this study were reluctant to disclose their experiences of harmful behaviours. In order to better understand why any marginalised individual does not report their experience, we must first consider these wider social structures and systems which they are attempting to navigate and which ultimately shape the way in which they interact with them. In a society where particular sections are systematically oppressed, and their expectation of the

authority is founded upon a history of disproportionate treatment and marginalisation, there is a clear pathway for dis-engagement and non-disclosure which can only be truly remedied with real systemic change. Individual and local level responses may go some way in fostering the relationships which lessen the impact of these wider influences, though these are very much dependent on people and personal relationships which are transient.

7.5 Chapter summary

Within this chapter I have sought to address the second research question of this study, which is concerned with the understandings that can be drawn from male sex workers reporting behaviours, relating to their experiences of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours. The findings of this work suggest that the majority of the men involved had not reported their experience to the police, NUM, healthcare professionals or another, less formalised, reporting stream. Indeed, of the 50 total experiences of harmful behaviour within the sample, only one was reported by the individual themselves and this was disclosed to other sex workers. Whilst, as this chapter has presented, the existing literature concerning female sex worker reporting behaviours suggests that crimes are under-reported, the men within this study were seemingly even more reluctant to report their experiences than those studies had suggested.

By leaning on realist criminology, and the idea that crime itself is a ‘complex social construction’ (Lea, 2016:60), I have developed a framework of understanding the barriers faced by the men involved in this work which highlights the complex negotiations between the individual, their social environment and the authority. Barriers to reporting, as has been outlined within this chapter, do not exist within a vacuum, but are rather influenced by the structural influences of the systems of social control which set normative conditions upon which people are expected to live their lives, and the ways in which the men involved navigate and negotiate with these outside influences.

Barriers to reporting then, are driven by issues which are woven within the fabric of society. Solutions to said barriers are therefore complex, though as I have suggested above, particular measures may help alleviate the specific presenting issues. The next chapter concludes the thesis, by summarising the key findings and contributions made by this study, along with the implications for theory, policy and practice in this area.

8 Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter is to summarise the key messages of this study and provide commentary on the contributions to the existing knowledge base made within. There is also a need for the chapter to deal with any questions of ‘what is next?’, raised by the work, both in terms of the implications of this study and the future research opportunities which are evident.

The chapter deals first with the most significant findings of the research, which are discussed against the research questions guiding the work. The contributions to knowledge made with these findings are then summarised, before the chapter deals with the policy implications of this work, and the wider implications for non-statutory service delivery and policing practice. The chapter ends with a discussion of the future research opportunities identified through the limitations of this study, highlighting where further work may be required to extend the knowledge base.

8.1 Summary of key findings

The primary aim of this research has been to understand the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or otherwise harmful behaviours. In order to meet this aim, I developed 3 research questions with related objectives. Within this section, I outline the key findings of this research against those questions, demonstrating how they are addressed by the findings of this work.

Question 1: How, if at all, is violence or otherwise harmful behaviour experienced by male sex workers?

Question 1 related objectives:

- a. To investigate the occurrence and experience of harmful behaviour against men who exchange sex for money, or other incentives.
- b. To generate insight into the ways in which men negotiate the risk of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour during the course of their sex work.

As the first of the objectives suggests, in order to support the main aim of understanding of the reporting behaviours of those involved in the study, it was important to investigate the occurrence of these behaviours and how they were experienced by the men. Within this study, I adopted a list of 10 behaviours informed by NUM’s reporting mechanism, and found that 16

of the 17 men who had taken part in the study had experienced at least one of the behaviours outlined. Whilst these experiences were most commonly of those ranked as the 'least harmful' according to a CCHI informed framework of understanding, there were also frequent reports of the experiences understood to be 'more' or 'most' harmful. Importantly, within this research I have highlighted that even those experiences considered to be less or not at all harmful by legal frameworks have the potential to be harmful in their own right, or to potentially leave an individual open to further harm, as was demonstrated in the discussion relating to time wasting in chapter 6. What is clear from this study, and the experiences of the men involved, is all of the behaviours listed are a significant concern for male sex workers, therefore it is important that reporting streams remain open and accessible to them. This includes for the behaviours which may not garner specific legal attention, but rather relate to the how the legitimacy of sex work as a profession is perceived, and how potential clients or the general public may treat sex workers. Non-statutory organisations may play some role in helping to mitigate the impact of behaviours such as verbal abuse and time wasting, which may cause harm and increase the risk of further harm, though may not be dealt with specifically by the police. Importantly, the men's experiences of these such behaviours reveal shortcomings in the existing criminal justice responses to harm, and highlight the need for wider social responses to the way in which sex work is approached as a profession.

In addition to generating insight into how harmful behaviours were experienced, this work also revealed some of the ways in which men negotiate the risk of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour in the context of their work. Within the sample, more masculine identities were mostly considered to be less vulnerable than more feminine identities, reflecting the wider socialised notions of gendered stereotypes. Indeed, there was some indication from the narrative of the men themselves, that outward performances of masculinity are perceived to be a preventative measure that can protect men from the behaviours of others. This was made most clear by the two men who had described taking away elements of their feminised presentation in order to protect themselves from violence, highlighting how they felt more able to do so where they better met masculine standards. Another of the men had discussed how he was able to project a more masculine presentation than some of his peers, and as a result he had faced less issues than they had.

Question 2: What understandings can be drawn from male sex workers reporting behaviours, related to their experiences of violence or otherwise harmful behaviours?

Question 2 related objectives:

- c. To explore and analyse the factors which influence the decision-making process when a male sex worker is considering reporting an incident of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour against them.
- d. To identify ways in which the reporting of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour can be facilitated.

Whilst experiences of the behaviours listed were frequent within the sample, the reporting of these behaviours certainly was not. The findings of this work note that of the 50 total types of experience disclosed by the men in a sex work context, only 3 had been reported in any way. Even more significantly, none of these experiences had been directly reported to a formal reporting mechanism, such as NUM or the police, with two of the cases being witnessed by a third party, and the remaining being reported to other people who sell sex. Interestingly, one of the men had discussed his experiences outside of a sex work context which he had gone on to report formally, noting that he would not disclose experiences occurring within a sex work context and that he ensured his status as being involved in sex work was not discussed in any interaction with the police. Indeed, significant barriers to reporting to the police within a sex work context were discussed by the sample of men and practitioners. Whilst the barriers described differed in some respects between individuals, there was a commonality within these discussions which helped with the development of three distinct categories of influence. This study has found that the three categories; the individual, the environment and the authority, interact to create the conditions which deter reporting. It is the formal and informal systems of control represented by the authority and the environment which are internalised by the individual, and subsequently influence decisions related to reporting. Within these categories barriers manifest as specific issues, most notably being the stigma associated with sex work and perceptions of men which influence the social environment, the fear of criminalisation and experiences of policing practice related to the authority and the impacts of these factors on the individual, such as the need for anonymity and the trivialisation of harmful experiences.

As well as helping to understand how these specific barriers to reporting are shaped, this framework can also give some indication as to how the reporting of violence or otherwise harmful behaviour can be better facilitated. Indeed, an understanding of the factors influencing a barrier to reporting also provides some insight into the gravity of the task of reducing its impact. Many solutions to the barriers to reporting were put forward by those involved in the research, though there is an overwhelming feeling that it is the promise of anonymity and

protection from legal consequences which is most likely to open up the possibility of men coming forward under these circumstances. These alone may not be enough however, with those involved in the study also indicating the need to develop relationships to support reporting, avoiding moral judgements, creating safe spaces and shifting perceptions of masculinity and the expectations of how men should behave.

Question 3: How does existing theory seek to explain male experiences within a sex work context and where are these understandings limited?

It is clear that existing feminist theory related to sex work has fallen short of fully appreciating the lived realities of male sex workers, with particular shortcomings in relation to male experiences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours. Similarly, whilst existing queer informed thought has offered a stronger acknowledgement of male involvement in sex work, this is rarely in consideration of their experiences of violence or other forms of harm, or their reporting behaviours related to said experiences. Indeed, even theories which place sex work in itself as a form of violence do not address male experiences in this vein, with it being considered an issue driven, rather than experienced, by men.

This research has shown that male sex workers experience violence and otherwise harmful behaviour in ways which are similar to what is understood about female sex workers, though this is all informed by a context in which men are not expected to be at risk in the same way. Indeed, gendered stereotypes driven by existing sex work related theory have been significant throughout this work and it is clear that the continued gendering of sex work policy and thought has implications for men, with their position being under-considered, under-recognised and they remain under-supported. The gendered stereotypes of sex work are also recognised by the men involved in this work, and have a clear impact on the way in which they perceived their interactions with transactional sex and any associated identity.

8.2 Contributions to knowledge made by this study

This research adds to the scant (particularly when compared to female sex work) literature available on the issue of male sex work more broadly. Whilst the topic has garnered increased attention over the last decade (see Whowell, 2010; Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013; Minichiello and Scott, 2014; Ellison and Weitzer, 2017; Morris, 2018; Kuhar and Pajnik, 2019; Scott, Grov and Minichiello, 2021), there is still little research which has focused on male

experiences of violence and otherwise harmful behaviours within a sex work context. This study, therefore, sits within a growing evidence base but as a unique insight into an issue which has been evidenced within the body of this work as being significant for men engaged in this type of activity.

The limited focus on men within the existing sex work related literature has been attributed throughout this work, in part, to the gendered understandings of sex work which have prevented the full acknowledgment of the potential for men engaged in behaviours which subvert heteronormative expectation. This work has presented an important challenge to gendered understandings of sex work throughout, highlighting the narrative of men involved in such work and also the potential for these men to face scenarios in which they are vulnerable to the harmful behaviour of others. By applying the same feminist research principles, around the participation and voice of marginalised groups, which have underpinned much of the existing work focused on female sex work, this research has highlighted where the existing debate has fallen short of addressing the needs of men. The work also presents the argument that abolitionist radical feminist theoretical understandings of sex work, and the subsequent policy approaches based upon them, have made dangerous assumptions of both male invulnerability and aggression, and also inherent female vulnerability.

Although this work has presented a challenge to stereotypes of masculine invulnerability, highlighting how in some circumstances masculine performances or the desire to maintain masculinity can indeed heighten vulnerability, it has also provided an insight as to how the men who participated in the study viewed the inter-relationships between masculinity, femininity and vulnerability. Indeed, this work contributes to the existing understanding of how men negotiate their masculine identity within interactions with others. Within the research interaction, the men were keen to maintain notions of dominance over less masculine or more feminine identities by highlighting how these identities are more vulnerable to the risk of harm than their own. To the men, more feminine identities than their own were the more vulnerable, with a number of them discussing vulnerability within the context of effeminate men, young boys and women, rather than themselves.

The negotiations of identity also extended to the ways in which the men managed other aspects of their lives, or themselves, which may have impacted how the outside world perceived them. This study supports existing literature (Oselin, 2018; Hanks, 2019) which suggests that, for some, there is a desire to reject the sex working identity. For these men, discussions of their sex work behaviours were detached from those about their identity, in a performance which both managed any stigma associated with their involvement in

transactional sex and supported the projection of their internal perception of self. It was evident that these men must contend, in their daily lives, with an intersection of factors which present a threat to this internal perception of self, including issues such as their sex working, their immigration status, housing arrangements, substance misuse behaviours and employment options. This study has shown that contending with these intersectional stigmatised characteristics can impact the ways in which the men interact with figures perceived to hold authority, such as the police and support mechanisms, in that they both create barriers to engagement and influence how open men are within any interactions.

Demonstrating how the intersections of these stigmatised characteristics impact reporting behaviours was but one element of the wider application of the tri-partite understanding of barriers. Developing Young's (1987) 'square of crime', this study has demonstrated how the barriers to reporting faced by the men within this study can be traced back to the formal and informal measures of social control presented by authority and the environment, and thus the ways in which the individual internalises these factors and adapts their behaviour accordingly. This theoretical contribution not only provides an understanding of how these barriers are formed, but in doing so gives an indication as to how these barriers can be addressed. Whilst some of the factors considered within this understanding are sex work specific, such as the stigmatisation of sex work behaviours, ultimately the theory considers the men and their lives through a wider lens, much as they asked me to do within the interviews when they discussed their lives outside of their sexual interactions. Systems of formal and informal social control also govern the behaviour of the wider, more heterogenous population of people, therefore there is potential for this understanding of barriers to accessing justice or support to be applied more widely.

8.3 Implications for policy and practice

This section outlines the policy and practice implications of the findings of this work. The first section begins with a broader discussion of the need for a move towards a gender nuanced approach to sex work related issues, before focusing specifically on the implications related to policing and support service provision.

8.3.1 Nuancing a gendered debate

Within this work I have acknowledged that men do make up the minority of those who provide sexual services, and indeed estimates of the prevalence of sex work have consistently found

men to make up a smaller percentage of the industry than women (see APPG on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade, 2014; import.io, 2014; Sagar *et al.*, 2014; Hester *et al.*, 2019). However, their limited number is by no means an excuse for their exclusion from the ways in which we think about sex work. Whilst it was never my intention for this study to develop knowledge and understanding around the prevalence of male sex work, the findings of this research present an interesting glimpse into how men may be impacted by these wider gendered understandings of their activities. Indeed, the men within the study present both an understanding of how male sex work has typically been a secondary concern of researchers and policy makers, compared to female sex work, and also an internalisation of the idea that sex work is something that women, rather than men, do.

Existing understandings of sex work relate mostly to female workers, and important distinctions have been made between male and female sex work within this study which perhaps demonstrate why male sex work is far less recognised by decision-makers and society in general. Previous research has suggested that male sex workers are more hidden (see Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013) and operate in a way which is less recognisable to outsiders than female sex workers do (see Ellison and Weitzer, 2017). Others recognise the links between the gay social and casual sex scene and transactional sex which mean that the general public are less exposed to male involvement in the industry (see Morris, 2018; Atkins and Laing, 2012; Niccolai *et al.*, 2013; Ellison, 2017). This study supports the existing literature in finding that a number of the men interacted with these settings in order to sell sexual services and did so more sporadically and opportunistically than female sex work has tended to be presented. A number of the men discussed the use of the gay casual sex and social scenes in order to facilitate meeting prospective partners, thus linking socialising, casual sex and paid sex in a way which has rarely been noted within research with female sex workers. The issue here, is that labels of sex work and sex worker fail to properly capture a lived experience whereby the act is merely a by-product of this wider identity and lifestyle. Sex work for a number of these men, although something that they had repeatedly been involved in, was neither strictly organised nor a constant or identifying feature of their lives. Several had discussed how for them, transacting sex was an option when they needed to make immediate capital gain, rather than a method of long-term sustenance. By limiting their involvement, both to the spaces mentioned above, and to this infrequent and casual model of sex work, these men in particular may avoid the gaze of the general public and continue to escape the attention of policy makers by virtue of their lack of visibility.

This ability to remain hidden is also in part facilitated by the internet, and the various forums in which prospective partners or clients can be met online. Several of the men within the study presented their use of the internet and mobile applications to facilitate their sex work, congruous with the findings of previous literature which has noted the rise in the use of the internet by male sex workers to facilitate their transactions (see Sanders *et al.*, 2018; Logan, 2010; Mclean, 2013;2015). Male sex workers use of the internet has been discussed as increasing their visibility and accessibility to clients, though indeed they are able to remain hidden to the general public as the spaces utilised are almost exclusively accessed by those who had intended to look for paid sexual encounters. This differs significantly from the traditional model of sex work which has been far more reliant on public spaces. Indeed, female sex work has traditionally posed a moral problem because it is both visible and recognisable to outside onlookers. Female sex work has benefitted (or suffered - under some circumstances) from a visibility and recognition from outside onlookers which has meant that there is a degree of awareness of their realities, which male sex work has not typically experienced. Indeed, the men involved in this study widely understood the stereotypical notions of female street-based sex work, and a number had also presented in outdoor settings to sell sex themselves. However, the socialisation of gender roles both within and outside of the sex industry, and the stereotypical understanding of sex work which has dominated thought around the issue, may mean that to many, the male presence in traditional sex work spaces is not associated with their activity in the same way a woman's presence within the space might be.

The presentation of male sex work which is less recognisable, and the lack of general awareness of the issue of which this is symptomatic, has led to policy and service responses which are tailored to the sex industry as it is known and understood, and which continue to fall short of the needs of men. Earlier it was discussed how there was a paucity of services available for male sex workers nationally (see Bryce *et al.*, 2015), whereas female sex work services are far more prevalent. It has also been evident through my mapping of services related to this work, that services available nationally are mostly limited to areas where there is a recognisable and more overt gay social and casual sex scene. Whilst this targeted service delivery may make some sense in theory, men operating in areas where there is a less recognisable gay scene may be further removed from the necessary support both in terms of formal service provision, and also any informal peer support networks formed within such spaces.

This is partly related to the significance placed on the role which gender plays within transactional sexual interactions, in scholarly efforts, policing and policy approaches, and the wider social understanding. Indeed, my review of the existing literature highlights the focus,

within popular explanations of transactional sexual relationships, on female vendors of services and male purchasers. Discussions of interactions which deviate from these heteronormative and hegemonic standards have been far more limited, with feminist schools of thought very much pillars of the debate surrounding sex work. The polarised ideological positions of sex work as exploitation and sex work as work, agree to some extent that it is patriarchy, the oppression of women by men and the resulting social structures, which play a significant role in driving involvement in transactional sex. These discussions remain dominant in understanding sex work, and both they and the resultant policy approaches informed by them fall short of addressing the needs of men who are only recognised as being the driving force behind the sale of sex.

Indeed, the policy framework related to sex work in England and Wales continues to be informed by understandings of sex work which place it as an issue of violence against women. This included a discussion within the VAWG Strategy 2016-2020 (Home Office, 2016) which highlighted how the government would consider how the Nordic model of criminalising the purchase of sex may impact the sex industry in England and Wales. The impact of abolitionist radical feminist ideology on policy is clear here, and also in the current ongoing discussions of adopting the model in England and Wales led by Labour MP Diana Johnson. Earlier policy documents also focus primarily on women as the victims of exploitation within the sex industry, with both *Paying the Price* and the resulting *Co-ordinated Prostitution Strategy* (Home Office, 2004; Home Office, 2006) lacking in mentions of male sex work.

The most recent work commissioned by the Home Office focused on the prevalence of sex work in England and Wales, led by Hester, Mulvihill, Matolcsi, Sanchez and Walker (2019) of the University of Bristol. The team's previous work is very much focused on the issue of gender-based violence, and notably there is a limited discussion of the role of male sellers of sex within their report. Only 13 of the 529 respondents to their online survey had 'explicitly' identified as male. However, the authors of this work note that they may have under-identified non-female gender groups because their identification was based on their mentioning of their gender in their response. In short, the survey did not ask the respondent their gender and if they did not explicitly state otherwise, they were assumed to be female. There is a clear insistence here that sex work remains a gendered issue. Whilst for the most part women do represent a larger percentile of the industry, non-female gendered people who transact sex continue to be marginalised by such an approach to research, service provision and policy.

Approaching sex work as an issue of violence against women and girls, primarily perpetrated by men, at policy level, is an unhelpful angle for both women who are presented

as lacking agency, and men who are presented as inherently problematic. This has a number of implications for the men involved in this study. Firstly, this policy approach does not acknowledge, nor make attempts to address, the suggestion that there are men who work within the industry, and that these men potentially face the risk of harm within the context of their work. Secondly, it diminishes the experiences of men by suggesting that their vulnerability within this space is in conflict with the broader expectations of them as men and is therefore not of concern to the state. Indeed, understanding sex work as an issue primarily impacting women places male and masculine identities as outside of the scope of attempts to support sex workers, however that support may be framed. With such an approach, sex work and the related support mechanisms remain issues which pose a challenge to an individual's masculine identity, and may pose barriers to reporting and help-seeking behaviours where men seek to negotiate the perception of their masculine identities.

Perhaps equally problematic, is that the gendered approach taken towards sex work has left male sex workers themselves in a position where they are influenced by a policy framework governing their transactional sex which has been designed with female needs primarily in mind¹. The framework therefore falls short of recognising the potential vulnerability of the population of men engaged in sex work; falls short of supporting their needs through service provision; and falls short of understanding their lived realities. The men involved in this work therefore, face the same repressive conditions under which female sex work is forced to operate by state policy and legislation, without any specific provision for the risk of harm which they potentially face within the context of their work.

It is unclear whether the lack of attention afforded to male sex workers is primarily driven by the hidden nature of male sex work discussed earlier, or the overarching perception that the sex work industry is inherently gendered, though a combination of both is likely closer to the truth. The impact of the continued under-representation of male and non-female identities within sex work remains the same irrespective of whether it is driven by ignorance or a lack of awareness. A system which is not open to a more nuanced reality cannot progress in the area, and for male sex workers the consequences of this may be significant. Therefore, it is important that there is further acknowledgment of the gender diversity at a policy level, in order to support the development of a better understanding of the lived realities of non-female gendered sex workers. This would mean moving away from frameworks informed by violence against women and girls, acknowledging varied realities and identities of those involved in selling sex.

¹ This may be debated, with the policy framework in England and Wales arguably detrimental for both male and female sex workers, though it is clear that the framework has been designed on the basis that sex work is an issue primarily affecting women.

Nuancing the way in which gender is thought of within the sex work debate in this way at the high-level, can help support the development of a more tailored support offering at the local level, appreciating the significance of gender in informing experience but also moving away from the idea that sex work as a phenomena is inherently and unquestionably gendered.

Nuancing the gendered thinking around the issue of sex work is not enough in silo however, to appropriately support the needs of those who took part in this study and others who share experiences with them. Gender has been an important concept for understanding the men's experiences in this work, as indeed it has in the wider study of sex work which has preceded this work. However, nuancing thought around gender is a gateway to acknowledging the varied elements of identity and experience of the men involved in this work which shapes social perceptions and responses to them, and their own internalisation (or expectation) of these same responses. Indeed, when contemplating seeking support, be that statutory or voluntary, the men face significant social pressures with which they must contend. These relate not only to their sex working or masculine identities, but also to other factors which challenge or threaten their position within normative social frameworks which exclude those who do not conform to expected standards of behaviour and presentation (see Goffman, 1963). Indeed, nuancing the gendered approach to sex work may see more specific work done with male sex workers, however sex work itself and the wider lifestyles of these, and other similarly positioned individuals, remain stigmatised, criminalised and therefore othered by the formal and informal mechanisms of social control.

Whilst this study has shown that a gendered presentation of sex work and the pursuit of a masculine identity plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of the men involved in this work, these other aspects of identity which shape their social interactions cannot be overlooked. Significant, of course, is their involvement in transactional sex, but also for some there was an intersectionality of elements such as criminality, deviance, poverty, immigration and sexuality, which inform both the responses to them by wider society and the ways in which they expect to be responded to by people and systems. Nuancing the gendered thought around sex work would facilitate more detailed discussions of these other factors, leaving space for wider social justice measures which recognise the impact of the perennial exclusion of those who, for one reason or another, do not meet the standards of normative social structures. This includes the male sex workers who took part in this study, the men involved who engaged in transactional sex to meet basic need and those who face similar marginalisation for the stigmatised behaviours and characteristics outlined in the above.

8.3.2 Service provision

This research suggests that, for those services which are available for male sex workers, it is important that their approach is developed from what is known about the men with whom they will be working, rather than assumptions made from what is already known about the female industry. As the findings of this and previous research (see Davies and Feldman, 1999; Timpson *et al.*, 2007) has suggested, there may be some similarities between male and female sex work, though there is difference enough to render a ‘one size fits all’ approach to supporting those who need it ineffective. For example, a practitioner participating in this research highlighted that often their service users would not discuss their sex work but would rather seek the service’s help for their wider needs. If sex work continues to be framed as an activity which women do, and men purchase, it must be acknowledged that any approach to supporting male sex workers should be formulated with the principle that for many, the idea of male sex work is contrary to their understanding or perception of what they do. For those whose identities do not fit within the female sex worker centric system of support, engagement becomes an obstacle as the available support in this area is often presented in a way which excludes them and the way in which they see themselves.

Importantly, there must also be consideration for the impact of how the sexuality of male sex workers is framed in service delivery. Organisations which are specific to LGBTQI+ groups are important in providing services specifically for individuals who identify with an identity included within the umbrella term. However, such a framing may also exclude some men engaged in the sale of sex. This research has supported the existing literature in noting the involvement of straight men in selling sex (see Escoffier, 2003; Scott, Minichiello and Meenagh, 2015). Nathan was the only straight man involved in sex work who contributed directly to the study, and he himself did not disclose any involvement in sex with men in the course of his work. For him, neither his sexual behaviours nor orientation is congruent with the LGBTQI+ identity and therefore a service framed in this way may not be accessible to him.

Likewise, practitioners Yvonne and Angela both discussed straight men who were involved with their services, and Angela in particular described how these men were involved in transactional sex with other men, which she deemed ‘survival sex’. Importantly, neither of their respective services are specifically framed as LGBTQI+ services, nor are they specific to sex work. The men engaged with these services, although most often involved in some level of sex work, receive a service which is tailored to their own needs, be that advice on working safely, assistance with benefits or housing, or support for various health needs. The value of such an approach to service delivery is that it does not exclude any identities, nor enforce any

labels which may be uncomfortable for potential service users. Whilst there are understandably constraints in terms of the scope of services and what they are able to deliver, a more open approach to service provision for men may be what is required in this area. Notably, using one of the above as an example, the service had provided a link between various services which specialised in specific areas of need such as drug and alcohol support, housing support, sexual health support and social care support. Perhaps there is the potential for the national delivery of a remote service which performs such a role for men, reaching out both to existing services who deal with issues auxiliary to sex work and to male sex workers themselves to identify those with sex work support needs and also to link male sex workers into the relevant services which they require. Such an approach would not be limited to areas with a more identifiable gay social scene, nor would it be specifically sex work focused. However, it may be argued that this approach limits the focus on those who are harder to reach and not engaged with existing support networks, particularly where there is a lack of local knowledge around how male sex work typically operates in the area. With that in mind, online outreach and supporting existing auxiliary services in recognising male sex work should be encompassed into any national project such as this.

Presenting any service as exclusive to either a sex work or LGBTQI+ label may exclude many who feel that their own identity falls outside of such a description, and whilst it may sound idiosyncratic to frame a sex work support service as not dealing primarily with the sex work issue, doing so allows the individual to define their own behaviours and identity and may leave support open to those who may be put off by any labelling which they feel does not fit them. The above discussed model of support for men is neither fully developed nor grounded within service delivery experience of my own, though the findings of this research has indicated the need for service delivery which is somewhat dictated by the service users' needs themselves, rather than the theoretical and anecdotal evidence of what is known about sex workers more generally. Therefore, prospective and existing services should consider applying these principles within their respective terms of reference, creating a system which does not exclude men engaged with transactional sex by way of identity, and addresses the issues which they see themselves as facing as opposed to those that the existing female-centric research has identified about sex work more generally.

8.3.3 Policing and the law

This work also has implications for legislation and policing practice in this area, having found particular approaches and elements of the police response (or anticipated response) to have a detrimental impact on the likelihood of an individual reporting.

One of the main issues facing the police in engaging some of the men involved in this study in particular, is their intersection of identities which mean that their contact with the police were more often underlined with concerns of their criminal behaviours outside of sex work, rather than their own experiences of harm or vulnerability. These men had discussed their use of substances, periodic homelessness and their arrest for criminal behaviours. One of the men in particular had discussed how he had felt as though the police in his area did not take kindly to him as they had responded to concerns of his behaviour a number of times. Similarly, from a police perspective, police officer 1 had discussed how there is some difficulty in adjusting the mindset to deal appropriately with individuals as a victim where they are commonly dealt with for their own behaviour. Whilst the police should treat the victimisation of all individuals appropriately, regardless of their previous contact with the police, these previous interactions shape their perception of an individual in a way similar to how the men's perception of the police is influenced. The dichotomous relationship between the identities of victim and perpetrator may render these men a subject of deviance as opposed to vulnerability in the view of the police, and the police as a negative force in the view of the men (see Daigle and Muftić, 2016).

The negative force of the police, and the associated fear of criminalisation, has emerged throughout this work as a key barrier to reporting. Whilst police organisations themselves are not at liberty to alter the legislative approach bestowed upon them by the state which potentially criminalises sex workers, they do have a role in applying it. NPCC guidance (Vajzovic, 2019: 5) on policing sex work suggests that the police should 'not start from a position that treats sex workers as criminals simply for being sex workers', and that the public interest should be considered in scenarios where any illegal sex work behaviours are recognised, such as two sex workers sharing premises for safety concerns.

The issue here, acknowledged by the practitioners and police involved in this study, is that there are 43 individual police forces in England and Wales who each seek to apply this guidance and the legislation in a way befitting of their communities. The variance in local level approaches to sex work and the ambiguity of the legislation governing it, mean that it is somewhat of a postcode lottery that determines the type of response experienced by sex workers. Louise, for example, discussed how the policing approach in her service area which

was criminalising sex workers and forcing them to seek support had led to many disengaging from her service. Compare this with Ryan's experience of the police, where he had a comfortable and open relationship with them as the force approach was focused on ensuring the safety of sex workers in the area, as opposed to reducing the presence of street-based sex workers.

It is understandable that each police force is responsible for its own demographic, and that there are local issues which must be considered in any decision on policing practice, though forces should be mindful of the consequences of their decisions. The NPCC guidance for policing sex work and prostitution 'recognises the need to address community concerns but also stresses as a priority the duty that police services have to enhance the safety of sex workers and to find practical ways to address crimes against, and exploitation of, those connected to prostitution' (Vajzovic, 2019: 3). This thesis has raised questions around just how 'practical' criminalising sex workers themselves is as a solution to addressing crimes against them. Indeed, it seems the guidance has not led to a blanket change in approach, and though there are pockets of good practice which have been raised by those involved in the study, the reality that this is guidance rather than something more binding is all too clear.

With a legislative framework so ambiguous, and with a government level policy approach suggesting that sex workers should be protected by targeting demand edging closer, police forces are not fully supported in applying what are sensible recommendations for practice. This issue is therefore bigger than policing, and efforts to reforming the law in this area should continue. There is a need for a clear message from the state that private and consensual sexual behaviour is not within the remit of the law, but physical and sexual violence, exploitation and otherwise harmful behaviours will not be tolerated, and that sex workers should be able to feel confident that their complaint would be taken seriously and not lead to their own sex work related behaviour being scrutinised. A change in the authority which governs sex work could very well lead to a change in the environment in which it exists, therefore creating a more supportive context for men such as those who took part in this study to live their lives.

8.4 Limitations of the study and future research

Whilst I feel that there is considerable strength in the way in which I have approached this work, and also in what I have found and contributed to the knowledge in this area, it would be remiss of me to not acknowledge where I have identified this work to be limited along the way.

Indeed, by identifying the limits of the work it is also possible to identify further research areas which may have a positive impact on understanding, policy approaches and the lives of others.

First and foremost, I recognise that the lack of consideration of trans sex workers voices specifically may be considered by some to be a limitation. This work has been limited to include the input of sex workers who self-identified their gender as being male; the reasoning for this was covered in chapter 3, and I am confident that this was the correct decision for the study. Although these parameters were necessary to ensure that the study was concentrated on the group best placed to meet its aim and objectives, their introduction has meant that I have been unable to comment specifically on where a trans gender identity may interact with the existing barriers to reporting discussed by the participants of this work. What has been found, therefore, is limited in the sense that I have been unable to consider or make conclusions on trans specific contexts and issues. There is scope therefore, for a study which seeks to apply what has been found within this work to a more heterogenous sample of sex workers and gender identities in order to fully analyse the influence of gender on how barriers to reporting are perceived and experienced. There is also scope for further work which is able to consider in more detail the impact of race, and also of location, on how barriers to reporting are perceived and experienced. Indeed, this study is limited in the sense that the participants were mostly white, and there is a distinct focus on two regions of England and Wales. Whilst I have made comments within this work about how race or immigration status may serve as a barrier to reporting, this is based on the experience of a small number of men and the findings in this area may be developed by work with an increased focus on these issues.

Another limitation of this study is that it lacks direct input from straight men who sell sex to men, meaning any discussion about their involvement in sex work has been centred on the narrative of those support service practitioners who have experience of working with them. Whilst there were a number of important observations made in this area by the practitioners, these accounts are secondary and are subject of their own interpretation of the men's reality. It is regrettable that this potentially vulnerable group of men, whose commercial sex interactions may challenge their own perception of their sexual identity, were not able to add their voice directly to the debates within this work. To attain the sample which I have for this study was an arduous task in itself, and I believe that gaining a sample which included straight men who sell sex to men would have been even more so. The challenge to a man's masculine identity presented by this behaviour may indeed have put many off talking to me about their experience, even had I made a direct approach to somebody whose reality fit this description. The lack of voice from this particular sub-section of the male sex worker demographic may have been a

limitation of the methodology of this work itself; given that I explored online spaces which were typically populated by gay male sex workers and those who were more open about their work, and that I could only spend a limited amount of time with the support service, therefore meeting only a small percentage of its client base. Whilst time and budget constraints dictated this to an extent, I still perceive this to be a limitation of this work. Future work in this area should seek to add to what I have been able to find by seeking more actively the voice of those groups of men who could not be fully represented here. This may involve a more ethnographic research approach embedded within service delivery, with the aim of building more long-standing and trusting relationships with this particular group of men. There is a potential that this future work could extend the contributions to theories of masculinity and vulnerability made by this study, by further exploring the potential for masculine performances to increase an individual's vulnerability to harm.

There are also some limits to this study's focus on reporting behaviours, given that reporting a crime is but the first step in a journey which involves other experiences which are potentially even more daunting, such as giving evidence in court. Whilst I do not believe this to be a particular limitation of this study, with the specific aim being to understand this initial reporting behaviour, there is scope for future work to consider this journey throughout the criminal justice system. Any such work could help garner an understanding of how men such as those involved in this work can be better supported to remain engaged within these processes beyond reporting, which could in turn be applied to any efforts seeking to increase the rates at which violence or otherwise harmful actions result in meaningful criminal justice responses.

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Phase 1 Survey Question Development

Initial survey questions were developed by the researcher, and were informed by previous research and initial discussions with sex work support services. These questions gave an idea of what the research would focus on, and were presented in a similar form to the final survey. On a visit to services, these survey questions were shown in paper-based form and practitioners at each service were asked whether they felt that I was approaching the most important issues, and whether they thought that given the nature of the research my approach was appropriately sensitive. The survey was also shown to a sex worker who was a client of one of the services, and he was asked his opinion on the survey. An experienced sex work focused academic outside of the supervisory team was also approached to provide their feedback on the questions.

The comments from these organisations and individuals were then used to inform a further draft of survey questions, which was implemented on the Qualtrics online survey software. This version of the survey was very similar to the final version, and was piloted as an online survey.

Approaches were made to the services, a male sex worker, a sex work focused academic and a non-sex work focused academic to participate in the pilot phase of the data collection. Participants were asked to go through the survey as though they were a male sex worker themselves, and to provide any feedback they saw relevant. This was asked of them so that I could check whether the data could be analysed, and also to ensure again that the framing of the questions was appropriate. It was at this stage that the survey received significant feedback and language in the introduction was changed, and questions were clarified/amended.

This sample of people were chosen primarily because:

- Service 1 – Had been involved in previous stage and could identify important issues around reporting.
- Service 2 – Experience of working directly with male sex workers, had been involved with previous stage also.
- Experienced Male sex worker – It was important to include the voices of male sex workers themselves at every stage of this research.
- Experienced Sex work focused academic – Having already completed research in a sex work field, it was important to seek the views of somebody who had been through this

process. Their opinion on the framing of questions and the survey process itself was important as they had already successfully researched the field and were therefore well informed about how the research should be approached.

- Non-sex work focused academic – This participant was important as their relative non-expert eye may have highlighted issues with the survey that expert or at least sex work focused academics, practitioners and those who identify with sex work terms may have missed. For example, many of the men I wish to speak with may not identify themselves as sex workers per se, but their behaviour may be in line with the studies focus. This participant was able to flag any technical terms which may have left some people feeling as though the survey was not relevant to them.

Once feedback was provided by the pilot sample, the final draft of the survey was discussed with a statistician who ensured that the questions would work in practice, and could be analysed in a way which made sense to the rest of the project. Coming from a largely qualitative field, and having qualitative focused supervisors, this guidance with quantitative approaches were important in ensuring that the questions that I was asking would in theory make sense and would be helpful to the data collection process going forward.

The survey was then released and was advertised using twitter and with a flyer posted to services.

Survey participant response slowed down, and it was decided to begin developing the interview schedule based upon the results of the survey so far *and* leave the survey open for any further responses. This decision was made for these reasons, a) the scheduled amount of time had elapsed between survey and interview development, b) there was no survey response in the days leading up to the decision, c) social media engagement began decreasing and the study had already been shared through various channels, d) funding was approved for service flyers on 24/09/2018 so it was decided that the survey should be kept open to allow responses from this sector.

Phase 2 Question Development – Male Sex Working Participants

Following a discussion with Alys and Debbie, I adopted an inclusive form of questioning where I did not ask questions about experiences directly, but alluded to certain issues and experiences and asked the interview participants views on the issue. Dewey (in Dewey and Zheng) discusses the emotiveness of sex work research and how to allow the respondent reveal what they want about their own experiences, whilst still answering the interviewers question. Their

example of this was “What kinds of experiences have people you know had with the police?”, instead of asking “What kind of experiences have you had with the police?”. With my questions I have depersonalised the questioning a step further. I have asked the participants how sex workers in general experience issues, and with this the participant can answer with their own experiences, their colleagues experiences, or for the sex work community in general if they wish.

As part of the methodology of this study, I also utilised the results of the previous phase – the online survey – to inform and develop the question of the interview phase. This was done by finding trends within the data, for example nobody had reported to the Police or NUM, so a line of questioning surrounding reporting to these bodies was taken. Also, it was found that the participants would be most comfortable reporting to their peers, so the importance of peer support networks was explored. Some of the questions also include use of visual descriptions of the data. The line of questioning was not developed by the researcher and their knowledge of the previous literature alone, but also included the lived experience of the participants of the previous phase.

Phase 3 Question Development

Initially, the phase 3 questions were developed to reflect the questions which had been used in the phase 2 interviews but sought to outline the narrative of practitioner participants on the issue. The initial draft of the schedule was then amended to reflect better the approach of phase 2 which attempted to depersonalise experience, so as to limit any potential impact that may arise because of the subject matter. For the phase in question, adjustments were made so that the emphasis within the questions was not on the practitioners individual actions, but their perspective of the way in which their service operated and their perceptions of issues faced by male sex workers. This part of the question development seen the editing of questions so that they did not use phrases such as ‘your service’ or ‘your clients’ and were presented rather as ‘the service’ or ‘clients of the service’. This simple change moves the questions away from personal responsibility and confrontational questions about their practice and towards discussions of the collective effort of the organisation.

To ensure that phase 3 was informed by the outcome of phase 2 rather than the schedule alone, the next measure taken was to develop a document which outlined the researchers initial theoretical thoughts about the themes which had arisen within the phase 2 interviews. Issues

of peer support networks, hierarchies of masculinities and a lingering mistrust of the Police were highlighted as being common themes throughout the previous phases and were therefore drawn upon to develop further questions.

Firstly, peer support networks were highlighted as being of vast importance to the men within the study. The intention within phase 3 was to discuss with practitioners how peer support networks and informal institutions of protection may be supported and developed with the help of more formal organisations such as the services themselves. For example, it was questioned whether service users were encouraged to meet other service users within their interactions with different projects and if so, how might this have impacted on the safety of those individuals.

Hierarchies of masculinities were highlighted by both participants, with one going so far as to suggest that the more masculine presenting males were at a lesser risk than more feminine presenting men. The idea that masculinity could be seen as a form of protection was fascinating, and the direction in which the discussion with practitioners was guided involved asking the practitioners to think about the ways in which masculinity impacted male participation within the service, and whether from a practitioners perspective there was a tangible relationship between masculinity and vulnerability.

Both interview participants had highlighted some positive interaction with the Police, yet there were some lingering elements of mistrust apparent. Of interest was the idea that this mistrust of the Police and more formal mechanisms of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), may spill over to less formal mechanisms who have links to the CJS such as NUM and also services, who although outside of the CJS sphere may have some interaction with it. The issue is perhaps that some male sex workers may see services and less formal reporting mechanisms as being too closely aligned with a formal CJS which they do not fully value and trust, resultant of the way in which sex work has been dealt with historically.

Phase 4 question development

Structured similarly to the phase 2 interview guide, phase 4 begins with a section which seeks to understand the participants role within the Police. This section is to help determine the nature of the individual's interaction with sex workers and to contextualise their own perspective on the issue of discussion.

The guide then moves on to discuss the participants perspective of policing sex work. The aim of this section is to develop an understanding of which section of the industry the individual is most likely to come into contact with, and how they feel sex work should be dealt

with at a personal level, before moving on to their understanding of operational guidelines later on in the interview.

It is not only important to seek their perspective of how sex work should be policed, but also of sex work in general. Important here is the way in which the Police staff see male sex work in particular, and as such the next section will discuss their perspective of male involvement of the industry, the law and their understanding of stigma. Here it will be interesting to discover whether male sex work is on the radar of the Police at an individual level, with consideration of men minimal on an operational level.

I am also interested to see whether the Police have any particular preparation for working with sex workers of any gender, and whether it is the NPCC guidance which informs their practice or more local level decision making. I have also included a question about working with male victims here, as it is quite likely that the Police do not recall having worked with a male sex worker because of issues with reporting and the reluctance of the men to disclose their status as a sex worker to the Police in their interactions which we have seen throughout the interviews.

In the section focused on barriers to reporting I have started with questions which look broadly at barriers, but I have also chosen to focus specifically on some barriers which have arisen in the interviews thus far. One question raises the issue of historic Police work with sex workers and the issues that this may still cause for present day interactions, after this was raised in the phase 2 interviews. I have also included a question about the relationship between vulnerability and sex work after reviewing the NPCC (2019) guidance which was underpinned with themes of vulnerability. If vulnerability is underpinning the Police's work on sex work, and the Police do not necessarily see men as vulnerable, how might this impact their practice?

The final section of the interview guide focuses on how the individual feels that the Police as a whole and them as independent actors help to encourage men come forward when they are victimised. Again this has been asked about men in general, as this may be the wider issue if men are not disclosing their status as a sex worker.

Appendix B: Pilot study report

Participants:

- **Tom:** Asked to participate because of his experience with both sex working and engaging in research about the sex industry. His perspective was vital in ensuring that the questions addressed the important issues and were sex worker friendly in language and theme.
- **Darren:** Asked to participate because of his outside-field perspective. Darren is studying for his PhD in another field and has experience of research within said field. His main role as pilot participant was to ensure that language was accessible to somebody who may not be familiar with particular sex industry terminologies.
- **Michael:** Asked to participate because of his research experience within the field. It was hoped that Michael may highlight any issues from his experience of researching sex work.
- **Lauren:** Practitioner with experience of working alongside male sex workers. Lauren was also part of the research instrument development in my placement.
- **Sharon:** Practitioner with experience of working alongside male sex workers. Sharon was also part of the research instrument development in my placement.
- **Melissa:** Practitioner with experience of working alongside male sex workers.

| <i>Participant</i> | <i>Comment</i> | <i>Resolution</i> |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Tom | Error message while clicking through the survey. | Checked whether the survey worked for me and asked other participants if they had any trouble. |
| Tom | Harmful behaviours needs to be defined more clearly, as SW are stereotyped as being chaotic and engaging in harmful behaviour. | Clarified within the introduction that the focus on the research is on the harmful/criminal behaviours of others. |
| Tom | Need to explain the association between SW and Criminology. | Removed that I am doing a criminology PhD, instead the emphasis is on what the research is about. |
| Tom | You say happy to talk to you, happy to listen to you would be a wonderful engagement. | Change agreed and made. |
| Tom | ‘Justice easier to attain’ is not accessible language, you should include less | Agreed, sentence changed to read: It is hoped that this research can help make |

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| | academic and more root-level language. | reporting easier by developing the way harmful behaviours are approached in the future. |
| Tom | You might want to mention that you have consulted SW. | Added this to the introduction, as well as contacting services. |
| Tom | ‘Online’ needs expansion, at the booking phase it will be different. | I break down the transaction to arrangement, service offered and location of service – This may mean that services are arranged online, and happen in person. |
| Tom | Some responses just offer ‘sex’, too vague and assumes anal sex is sex. Should include a longer list of acts like BDSM, BFE, fetish and other specialist services. | Added categories of sex and the suggested categories. Left out the other specialist as I have a self-defined box. |
| Tom | Some responses in the motivation section reinforce stereotypes, and I added job satisfaction to the self-defined area. | Job satisfaction added and financial difficulty removed, as per comments by Shona also. Also added to gain experience and skills, and the work suited my skills set as per advice to add more standard work responses. |
| Tom | Feel protected from harmful behaviours statement. | Agreed and statement removed. |
| Tom | Who knows question, add in colleagues, escort forum and neighbours. | All added. |
| Tom | Attitudes towards men protecting themselves, in barriers section – loaded question. | Changes to attitudes towards men. |
| Tom | There needs to be more SW industry terms used. | I purposefully avoided SW industry terms, but have added escorting to services offered. |
| Tom | By only allowing male participants, other male identities may feel excluded such as trans men. | Opened up survey to all identities, and distinction will only be made in analysis phase. |
| Tom | Swish is now based in Coventry. | Contact details updated. |

| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| Sharon/Melissa | Exchanging sex is used without the 'for money..' part, it becomes ambiguous. | Added for money... where appropriate. |
| Sharon/Melissa | Question about reporting could not capture if somebody was to experience 3 cases of violence, and only report once. | Added the word 'ever' to this question, captures if any of the experiences were reported. To ask how many experiences were had/reported would add a minimum of 2 questions and I am at a limit already. |
| Sharon/Melissa | Alcohol and substance question is uncomfortable until you see the next question which breaks down use, should group them both. | I cannot group these questions as the second question should only appear to those who answer affirmatively so I have included a note so that participants are aware that the type of use is broken down in the next question. |
| Sharon/Melissa | Not sure what is meant by sexual attraction in the motivations question. Also freedom of time, i.e working less hours should be added. | Changed to sexual attraction to partner/client, and added working less hours/having more free time. |
| Sharon/Melissa | Benefits of SW question doesn't include good goods' just good money. | Added a good goods/gifts option. |
| Sharon/Melissa | The breakdown of options to money, fund lifestyle, purchase goods seems unnecessary to me, as we all work to fund a lifestyle/buy goods/avoid financial difficulty.... I don't know why it needs to be broken down from just 'for money' | I am distinguishing here between earning money, like we do in a job, or earning extra money for particular purchases when needed. Financial difficulty removed. |
| Sharon/Melissa | Secrecy but no further breakdown – from who? Also, you have included impact on personal sexual relationships but not on relationships more broadly. | Added Secrecy from friends, secrecy from family, impact on friendships and time wasters. |
| Sharon/Melissa | 'I feel free to stop selling sex..' – if you are getting at being trapped in sex work maybe ask 'I feel exchanging sex has impacted my future work options' | Changed to the suggested statement. |

| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| Sharon/Melissa | Feel protected from harmful behaviours – do not understand. | Second comment about this, statement removed. |
| Sharon/Melissa | Which of the following knows/knew about you exchanging sex? Question confusing, consider changing to who knows/knew. | Change made. |
| Michael | Might it be worth including regions of Wales, North, South etc? | Added regions of Wales. |
| Lauren | Would be useful to have tick all that apply on drug and alcohol use question. | Select all that apply added to this question. |
| Lauren | The questions around positive and negative there should be a says none of the above. | Added none of the above for these questions. |
| Lauren | Update debrief information about men's room. | Updated. |

Appendix C: Phase 1 questions

- 1) How old are you?
 - a) Under 18
 - b) 18-24
 - c) 25-34
 - d) 35-44
 - e) 45-54
 - f) 55 or older

- 2) Which region of the UK best describes where you live, or spend the majority of your time?
 - a) North West
 - b) North East
 - c) Yorkshire & Humber
 - d) South East
 - e) South West
 - f) East of England
 - g) Greater London
 - h) West Midlands
 - i) East Midlands
 - j) South West Wales
 - k) South East Wales
 - l) North Wales
 - m) Mid Wales

- 3) What is your resident status?
 - a) UK national
 - b) Permanent resident
 - c) EU resident
 - d) Working visa
 - e) Student visa
 - f) Visitor visa

- 4) How would you identify your gender?
 - a) Male
 - b) Female
 - c) Female to male transgender
 - d) Male to female transgender
 - e) Non-binary
 - f) Self-defined

- 5) How would you define your sexual preference in your personal life?
 - a) Straight

- b) Gay
 - c) Bisexual
 - d) Pansexual
 - e) Asexual
 - f) Self-defined
- 6) What is your relationship status?
- a) In a relationship
 - b) Single
 - c) Married
 - d) In an open relationship
 - e) In a civil partnership
 - f) Divorced
 - g) Self-defined
- 7) Have you ever exchanged a sexual or erotic act, for money or anything else? (This may include, but is not limited to – exchanging sex or intimate touching for money, masturbating over webcam for gifts or cash, working at a party as a butler in the buff)
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Rather not say
- 8) Do you currently exchange sex or other erotic acts, for money or anything else?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Rather not say
- 9) How long have you done/did you do this?
- a) 6 months or less
 - b) 6 months to 1 year
 - c) 1-5 years
 - d) 6-10 years
 - e) 11-20 years
 - f) 20+ years
- 10) Which term best describes how often you do/did this?
- a) Most days (3+ times per week)
 - b) Weekly (1-2 times per week)
 - c) Fortnightly (2-3 times per month)
 - d) Monthly (Once a month)
 - e) Every couple of months (around 4-8 times per year)
 - f) A couple of times per year (1-3 times per year)
 - g) On a couple of occasions over the years

h) Self-defined

11) How is/was this exchange usually arranged? (Select all which apply)

- a) On the street/in a public space
- b) In a bar/club/pub
- c) Online advertisement
- d) On an app
- e) Through an agency
- f) Through a newspaper advert
- g) In a sauna/massage parlour
- h) At a party not specifically organised for sex (house party)
- i) At a sex/BDSM/swinging party
- j) Self-defined

12) Where does/did the act usually then take place? (Select all which apply)

- a) On the street/in a public place
- b) In a bar/club/pub
- c) Online
- d) Over the phone
- e) Your home
- f) Partner/client's home
- g) A hotel
- h) A sauna/massage parlour
- i) At a party not specifically organised for sex (house party)
- j) At a sex/BDSM/swinging party
- k) Self-defined

13) Who was/is your typical paying partner/client?

- a) Men
- b) Women
- c) Both men and women
- d) Self-defined

14) What type of acts do/did you offer? (Select all which apply)

- a) Vaginal sex (giving)
- b) Anal sex (receiving)
- c) Anal sex (giving)
- d) Oral sex (receiving)

- e) Oral sex (giving)
- f) Mutual masturbation (receiving)
- g) Mutual masturbation (giving)
- h) Telephone sex
- i) Webcam shows
- j) Butler in the buff
- k) Escort services
- l) Stripping/dancing
- m) Cuckolding
- n) Sugar babying
- o) Porn Acting
- p) Professional dominant or submissive
- q) BDSM
- r) Fetish
- s) Boyfriend Experience
- t) Self-defined

15) Which region best describes where the exchange took/takes place? (Select all which apply)

- a) North West
- b) North East
- c) Yorkshire & Humber
- d) South East
- e) South West
- f) East of England
- g) Greater London
- h) West Midlands
- i) East Midlands
- j) South West Wales
- k) South East Wales
- l) North Wales
- m) Mid Wales
- n) Self-defined

16) Do/did you ever use alcohol or other substances during or before the exchange takes/took place? (The type of alcohol/substance use is broken down in the next question)

- a) Not at all
- b) Hardly ever
- c) Sometimes

- d) Often
- e) Very Often
- f) Rather not say

17) What type of alcohol or substance use was this? (Select all which apply)

- a) Light alcohol use (for example a glass of wine/beer)
- b) Moderate alcohol use (a couple of glasses of wine/beer)
- c) Heavy alcohol use (a bottle of spirits/multiple bottles of wine/beer)
- d) Light drug use (a few tokes of a joint)
- e) Moderate drug use (A few lines of cocaine/party drugs)
- f) Heavy drug use (Heroin/spice/crack cocaine use)

18) How would you define your employment status? (Select all which apply)

- a) Full-time employed in a sex related role
- b) Part-time employed in a sex related role
- c) Full-time employed in a non-sex related role
- d) Part-time employed in a non-sex related role
- e) Self-employed
- f) Studying full time
- g) Studying part time
- h) Unemployed
- i) Self-defined

19) What motivates/motivated you to exchange sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else? (Select all which apply)

- a) Money
- b) Sexual pleasure
- c) Anticipated enjoyment
- d) Flexibility compared to other jobs
- e) Working less hours/ having more free time
- f) To fund my lifestyle
- g) To fund the purchase of goods
- h) A good offer of money/goods/something else
- i) Sexual attraction to partner/client
- j) Needed accommodation for the night
- k) To fund an alcohol or substance habit
- l) Persuaded by somebody else
- m) Seen exchanging sex as a career choice
- n) Job satisfaction
- o) To gain experience and skills

- p) The work suited my skills set
- q) Self-defined

20) What are/were the positive elements of exchanging sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else? (Select all which apply)

- a) Good Money
- b) Good goods/gifts
- c) Flexible hours
- d) Less work/more free time
- e) Sexual pleasure
- f) Working conditions
- g) Being your own boss
- h) Good colleagues
- i) Good clients
- j) Raised self-esteem
- k) Job satisfaction
- l) Empowerment
- m) × None of the above
- n) Self-defined

21) What are/were the negative elements of exchanging sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else? (Select all which apply)

- a) Violence
- b) Fear of violence
- c) Secrecy from family
- d) Secrecy from friends
- e) Unclear legal framework
- f) Working conditions
- g) Low income
- h) Sexual exploitation
- i) Bad clients
- j) Time wasters
- k) Bad colleagues
- l) Lack of employment rights
- m) Lack of unionised employment rights
- n) Unpredictable earnings
- o) Lowered self-esteem
- p) Negative judgements of sex work
- q) Impact on personal sexual relationships

- r) Impact on friendships
- s) Physical demand
- t) Emotional demand
- u) × None of the above
- v) Self-defined

22) How far do you agree with the following statements? (Strongly disagree – strongly agree)

- a) I felt/feel safe whilst exchanging sex for money or anything else
- b) I am likely to seek help from the Police, should I need it
- c) I feel exchanging sex for money or anything else, has impacted my future work options

23) Are you are that it is legal for a consenting individual over 18 to sell sexual services in private, to another consenting adult?

- a) Yes
- b) No

24) Are you aware of any services who help men who exchange sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else?

- a) Yes
- b) No

25) Have you ever attended a service which helps men who exchange sex for money, or anything else?

- a) Yes
- b) No

26) Have you ever attended a service which helps men who exchange sex for money or anything else?

- a) Yes
- b) No

27) How likely are you to use a service which helps men who exchange sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else?

- a) Very unlikely
- b) Unlikely
- c) Neither likely nor unlikely
- d) Likely
- e) Very likely

28) Who knew/knows about you exchanging sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else?
(Select all which apply)

- a) Partner
- b) Friends
- c) Family
- d) Neighbours
- e) Colleagues
- f) Escort forums
- g) Unsure whether anybody knows
- h) None of the above

29) Do you know anybody else who exchanges/exchanged sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

30) Have you ever experienced any of the following whilst or because of you exchanging sex or erotic acts, for money or anything else? (Select all which apply)

- a) Physical violence
- b) Sexual violence
- c) Verbal abuse
- d) Threatening behaviour
- e) Blackmail
- f) Robbery
- g) Removal of condom without consent
- h) Attempted removal of condom without consent
- i) Stalking/harassment
- j) Time wasting

31) Of the incidents you have experienced, which have you ever reported?

Participants asked to select from a list of behaviours which they had selected in the previous question

32) Who did you report to? (Select all which apply)

- a) The Police

- b) National Ugly Mugs
- c) A healthcare professional
- d) Friends
- e) Family
- f) Other people who exchange sex
- g) Other colleague
- h) Self-defined

33) Of the behaviours you have not experienced, how likely would you be to report them?

Participants asked to rate how likely (Very likely – very unlikely) on a list of the behaviours they had not selected in question 30.

34) If you were to report these behaviours, who would you be most comfortable reporting to? (Select all which apply)

- a) The Police
- b) National Ugly Mugs
- c) A Healthcare professional
- d) Friends
- e) Family
- f) Other people who exchange sex
- g) Other colleague
- h) Self-defined

35) How strongly do you think each of the following are barriers to reporting? (Not at all – Very strongly)

- a) Attitudes towards sex work
- b) Attitudes towards sex between men
- c) Attitudes towards men
- d) Fear of being criminalised yourself
- e) Fear of not being believed
- f) Fear of being outed for exchanging sex
- g) Incident was not serious enough
- h) Incident could be dealt with in your own way
- i) There were no witnesses of the incident
- j) Mistrust of the police
- k) Disruption caused by a court case
- l) Haven't wanted to talk about the incident

36) Are there any other barriers to reporting which were not mentioned in the previous question?

Free text response

37) Do you have anything at all you would like to add?

Free text response

Appendix D: Phase 2 interview guide

A) Introduction

1. Informed consent sheet given, allow participant to read.
2. Ask participant whether they have any questions.
3. Gain informed consent, either by signature or by verbal confirmation (Skype interviews).
4. Remind participant of their rights and check whether they would like to continue.

B) About the participant

1. How would you like me to address you during the interview?
2. When talking about this topic (transacting sex) how would you like me to refer to it? (i.e as sex work)
3. How old are you?
4. Where are you from?/Where do you spend the majority of your time?
5. How would you define your gender identity?
6. How would you define your sexual preference?
7. What is your relationship status?
8. What is your employment status? What sort of work is this?

C) Participants involvement in sex work

1. Do you currently work in the sex industry?
2. What kind of sex work are you/were you involved in?
3. When did you start working in the sex industry?
4. How often do/did you sex work?
5. Why do you think people first get involved with sex work?
6. What motivates people to continue sex working?

D) Participants experience of sex work

1. What are the main differences between male and female sex work?
2. How is stigma experienced by male sex workers, in comparison to female sex workers?
3. What are the main issues faced by male sex workers?
4. What impact does stigma have on the lives of male sex workers?
5. What role do you think masculinity plays in understandings of male sex work?

E) Sex workers perception of their safety whilst sex working

1. How big of an issue is safety for sex workers? What makes sex work safe? What makes sex work unsafe?
2. What measures do sex workers take to ensure their own safety?
3. How is the potential vulnerability of male sex workers perceived?
4. Describe the relationship between sex workers and the police.

F) Sex workers experience of harmful behaviours

1. How do sex workers experience violence?
2. What actions do sex workers see as being most harmful?
3. Whose actions do sex workers see as being most harmful?
4. When I asked which harmful behaviours had been experienced by the survey participants, time wasting was the most frequently reported issue. How much of an issue is time wasting for sex workers, and why is it so harmful?

G) Sex workers experience of reporting harmful behaviours

1. None of the survey participants had reported harmful behaviour to the Police or National Ugly Mugs. Is this surprising?
2. When I asked to who sex workers would be most comfortable reporting harmful behaviour, other people who exchange sex was the most popular option. How important are peer support networks for sex workers?
3. What do sex workers perceive as being barriers to reporting the harmful behaviour of others?
4. How might the identity of the perpetrator influence the decision to report harmful behaviour?
5. What factors may encourage a sex worker to report the harmful behaviour of others?
6. If an incident is not reported to the police or NUM, how might a sex worker otherwise deal with it?
7. More than half of the participants (7) felt strongly or very strongly that fear of being criminalised themselves was a barrier to reporting the harmful actions of others, yet most of the participants understood that the sale of sex between consenting adults in private was legal. How does the legal framework surrounding sex work impact sex workers?

Appendix E: Phase 3 interview guide

A. Introduction

1. Informed consent form given
2. Consent gained verbally and via signature
3. Chance for questions
4. Reminder of rights of participation

B. About the participant/their work

1. Please tell me a bit about the service/project.
2. What section of the sex industry is the service/project primarily aimed at?
3. How is the service/project funded?
4. How long have you worked with this service/project?
5. Have you ever worked with a similar service/project?
6. What is the nature of your own interaction with sex workers?
7. What type of sex work are the clients of the service/project typically involved with?
8. How does the service/project make initial contact with sex workers?

C. Differences in approaches towards male and female sex work

1. What differences do you think there are between male and female sex work?
2. Is the service available to male clients?
3. Does the service market itself to its male clients?
4. Is it difficult to get men to engage with the service?
5. What role do you think masculinity plays in the way in which male sex work is understood?
6. How does masculinity impact interactions between the service and clients?

D. Experience of working with male sex workers

1. What issues do the services clients typically face?
2. What support do the services clients most often need?
3. Tell me a bit about your understanding of the stigma faced by sex workers.
4. Do you think that male and female sex workers face similar levels of stigma?
5. How does the stigma associated with sex work impact your work as a practitioner?
6. From your experience, how important are peer support networks for sex workers?

7. How can more formal services help support the development and maintenance of peer support networks?
8. Can you see any issues arising within peer support networks?
9. How does the legal framework for sex work impact sex workers in their day to day work?
10. Thinking about your experience working with the service, how would you describe the relationship between masculinity and vulnerability?

E. Approaches to harm

1. How big of an issue is safety for male sex workers?
2. What measures do sex workers take to ensure their own safety?
3. What type of actions do you think sex workers would say are most harmful?
4. Whose actions do you think sex workers would say are most harmful?
5. What approaches to harm minimisation does the service/project take?

F. Reporting harm

1. None of the survey participants had reported harmful behaviour to the Police or National Ugly Mugs. Is this surprising?
2. Has your work ever seen you deal with the Police or any other criminal justice agency? What was your experience?
3. How do the Police in the projects area approach sex work?
4. How could the Police better help ensure the safety of sex workers?
5. A lingering mistrust of the Police has been apparent in the research so far, do you think that this mistrust has any impact on relations between the service and sex workers?
6. Does the project use the National Ugly Mugs reporting service? What is your experience of working with National Ugly Mugs?
7. It has been mentioned in the interviews so far that male sex workers do not see NUM as being a service for men, what is your perspective on this?
8. Thinking again about the lingering mistrust of the Police, does this have any impact on sex workers views of NUM?
9. From your experience of working with Male sex workers, what are the main barriers to them reporting the harmful behaviour of others?
10. How do you think our legal framework impacts sex workers and their decision to report harmful behaviours against them?

11. Drawing on your experience, how might masculinity impact a male sex workers decision to report harmful behaviour against them?
12. How do you think sex workers could be encouraged to come forward, if they were to experience harmful behaviour?
13. How do you help mitigate any barriers to reporting in your role?
14. How can the experience of reporting harmful behaviour be improved for sex workers?

Appendix F: Phase 4 interview guide

A. About the participants work:

1. How would you describe the nature of your role within the Police?
2. How long have you worked within this role?
3. How long have you worked for the Police?
4. What does your day to day role involve?

B. About the participants perspective of sex work Policing:

1. Please describe for me what sex work is most likely to look like in your forces area.
2. What issues does sex work present in your forces area?
3. What approach to policing sex work does your force take?
4. How do you think sex work should be policed?
5. What should the aim of policing sex work be?

C. About the participants perspective of sex work:

1. What issues do you think sex workers most commonly face?
2. How common do you think male sex work is in your area?
3. How common do you think male sex work is nationally?
4. What differences do you think there are between male and female sex work?
5. What is your understanding of the legal framework regarding sex work?
6. What do you understand of the stigma faced by sex workers?
7. Is there a difference in how men and women experience this stigma?

D. Preparing to work with sex workers:

1. What training have you ever received for working with sex workers?
2. What do you know about the most recent NPCC guidance for policing sex work?
3. What training have you ever received for working with male victims?

E. About the participants experience of working with sex workers:

1. Have you ever had an interaction with a male sex worker?
2. What was the nature of this interaction?
3. Was it difficult to get them to engage with you?
4. Are you aware of the National Ugly Mugs scheme?

5. Have you ever interacted with National Ugly Mugs? What was the nature of this interaction?
6. How might National Ugly Mugs work to encourage sex workers to report harmful behaviour against them?

F. Barriers to working with male sex workers:

1. What do you see as being the main barriers to reporting presented to a male sex worker?
2. How do the Police help mitigate any barriers to reporting?
3. How do you think the legal framework of sex work might impact an individual's decision to report harmful behaviour against them?
4. How do historical Police approaches to sex work impact your work in the present day?
5. There has been a lingering mistrust of the Police apparent in the research thus far. How do you think the Police have attempted to address this issue?
6. How would your force approach an offence committed against a sex worker?
7. How would you describe the relationship between masculinity and vulnerability?
8. How would you describe the relationship between sex work and vulnerability?
9. In your experience, are men less likely to report violent or otherwise harmful behaviour than women?
10. How does stigma impact the interaction between a Police officer and a sex worker?

G. Encouraging reporting:

1. How do the Police attempt to encourage reporting from male victims?
2. What do you do in your role to encourage reporting from male victims?
3. How do you think the experience of reporting harmful behaviour can be improved for male victims?

Appendix G: Alternate phase 4 interview guide

1. What do you see as being the main differences between male and female sex work?
2. What do you see as being the main barriers to sex workers reporting their victimisation to the police?
3. Do you think male sex workers face any specific barriers to reporting?
4. How would you describe the relationship between masculinity and vulnerability?
5. What difficulties do you think the legal framework for sex work creates?
6. How do historical policing approaches to sex work impact the work being done present day?
7. Do you feel that there is a disconnect between the NPCC guidance and front-line policing of sex work? What do chiefs need to do to address this?
8. Are the police behind in their approach to male sex work?
 - a. How do you think the current research environment related to sex work impacts this?
9. What does a good model of police response to sex work look like?
10. How can the police better encourage men to report their victimisation?
11. In your opinion, what should the police priority be in sex work related matters?
12. What more can NUM do to encourage the reporting of male sex workers?

Appendix H: Letter to services

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jordan Dawson, I am a postgraduate researcher from the Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law, Swansea University. I am currently completing a PhD in Criminology, where my research is focused on understanding the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or other harmful behaviours in the course of their work. In order to understand this issue, the project will seek to:

- Investigate the occurrence of violence against men who exchange sex for money, or other incentives.
- Understand how men negotiate the risk of violence in the course of their sex work.
- Explore the factors which influence the decision-making process when considering reporting an incident of violence.
- To consider how the reporting of violence can be encouraged.

I am writing to you in order to ask whether you would please give permission for members of your team to participate in my research project. This would include them being involved in an interview about their experience working with male sex workers, it is hoped that this research will help inform the process of reporting violence and other harmful behaviour, in order to help encourage those who do become victims to such actions to come forward.

If you are happy for your team members to participate, please let me know. If you have any questions before you consent for them to do so, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Jordan Dawson
Postgraduate Researcher
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
Swansea University
Singleton Park
Swansea
SA2 8PP

Appendix I: Informed consent form (phase 2)

Do you consent to take part in this research?

My name is Jordan Dawson and I am a postgraduate researcher from Swansea University, supervised by Mrs Deborah Jones. The objective of this PhD study is to understand the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or other harmful behaviours in the course of their work. In order to understand this issue, the project will seek to:

- Investigate the occurrence of violence against men who exchange sex for money, or other incentives.
- Understand how men negotiate the risk of violence in the course of their sex work.
- Explore the factors which influence the decision-making process when considering reporting an incident of violence.
- To consider how the reporting of violence can be encouraged.

The study will be in stages, this is stage 1 – a short questionnaire about experiences of selling/transacting sex. Should you feel as though you would like to stop completing the survey at any time, please do so. At the end of the survey you will be invited to participate in a voluntary follow up interview – stage 2 of the project. If you want to take part, then please leave your email address and I will get in touch.

Participant agreement:

- I have read, and fully understood the information provided to me.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time without any penalty.
- I am happy for the interview to be recorded.
- I understand that my data will be held securely, and that my name will not appear anywhere in the research.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix J: Informed consent form (phase 3)

Do you consent to take part in this research?

My name is Jordan Dawson and I am a postgraduate researcher from Swansea University, supervised by Mrs Deborah Jones. The objective of this PhD study is to understand the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or other harmful behaviours in the course of their work. In order to understand this issue, the project will seek to:

- Investigate the occurrence of violence against men who exchange sex for money, or other incentives.
- Understand how men negotiate the risk of violence in the course of their sex work.
- Explore the factors which influence the decision-making process when considering reporting an incident of violence.
- To consider how the reporting of violence can be encouraged.

The study will be in stages, this is stage 3 – a short interview with practitioners about experiences of working with men who sell/transact sex.

Neither your name, nor the name of the project/service with which you work will be named anywhere within the research. Should you feel as though you would like to stop completing the interview at any time, please let me know and the interview will be terminated and any information recorded will be destroyed.

Participant agreement:

- I have read, and fully understood the information provided to me.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time without any penalty.
- I am happy for the interview to be recorded.
- I understand that my data will be held securely, and that my name will not appear anywhere in the research.

Signed:

Date:

Do you consent to take part in this research?

My name is Jordan Dawson and I am a postgraduate researcher from Swansea University, supervised by Mrs Deborah Jones. The objective of this PhD study is to understand the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or other harmful behaviours in the course of their work. In order to understand this issue, the project will seek to:

- Investigate the occurrence of violence against men who exchange sex for money, or other incentives.
- Understand how men negotiate the risk of violence in the course of their sex work.
- Explore the factors which influence the decision-making process when considering reporting an incident of violence.
- To consider how the reporting of violence can be encouraged.

The study will be in stages, this is stage 4 – a short interview with the Police about experiences of working with men who sell/transact sex.

Neither your name, nor the name of the organisation with which you work will appear anywhere within the research. Should you feel as though you would like to stop completing the interview at any time, please let me know and the interview will be terminated, and any information recorded will be destroyed.

Participant agreement:

- I have read, and fully understood the information provided to me.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time without any penalty.
- I am happy for the interview to be recorded.
- I understand that my data will be held securely, and that my name will not appear anywhere in the research.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix L: Information sheet and informed consent (phase 1)

My name is Jordan Dawson and I am a PhD researcher from Swansea University.

This research is about the experiences of men who exchange sex or erotic acts for money or other goods/benefits. You are being asked to take part in a short online survey, where you will be asked some questions about yourself, your experiences of exchanging sex for money or other goods/benefits and the reporting of the harmful/criminal behaviour of others. This is the first phase of the research, and the findings of this exercise will help inform the discussion of the next phase, an interview, which you will be invited to at the end of this survey.

In developing this study I have spoken to men with experience of exchanging sex, and practitioners who have experience in working with men who exchange sex. You will notice that some of the questions include pre-set answers which you can select from. These answers have been informed by previous surveys/research and are not intended to generalise the experiences of all of the men who take part in this survey. Some may not be applicable to you, but may be important to others.

The survey should take around 10-15 minutes to complete.

If you do not want to participate, then no problem! This study is completely voluntary, but if you do have something to say, we will be happy to listen to you.

This is an opportunity to be heard. It is hoped that this research can help make reporting easier by developing the way harmful behaviours are approached in the future.

I do not believe that there are any risks with taking part in this study, as you will be completely anonymous. We will however, be discussing some sensitive issues. I will be as sensitive as I possibly can but please, if something does upset you, do not continue with the survey and contact me at j.l.dawson@swansea.ac.uk if you would like to talk to me further. If you would like to contact my supervisory team please email A.B.Einion@Swansea.ac.uk or Deborah.A.Jones@swansea.ac.uk.

It is vitally important that only those aged 18 and over participate in this study. If you are younger than 18 then please do not try and take the survey.

By ticking the below boxes, and proceeding to the study you are confirming that you understand this information and that you consent to take part in this research.

- I have read, and fully understood the information provided to me.
- I am aged 18 or over.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time without any penalty.
- I am happy for my response to be recorded.
- I understand that my data will be held securely, and that my name will not appear anywhere in the research.

Information for participants

My name is Jordan Dawson and I am a PhD researcher from the Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law, Swansea University. I am completing my PhD in Criminology, and the data gained from today's activity will contribute towards my study.

This research is about the experiences of men who transact sex, and is focused on incidents of violent and harmful behaviour. The researches main aim is to understand the reporting behaviour of men who experience this type of harmful behaviour, in order to encourage reporting of future offences.

You are being asked to take part in an interview where you will be asked about your experiences transacting sex, and your views of how sex workers experience harmful behaviour. The interview should take around 45 minutes to 1 hour depending on the level of discussion.

If you do not want to participate, then no problem! This study is completely voluntary, but if you do have something to say, we will be happy to talk to you. This is an opportunity to be heard. It is hoped that this research can help develop the way such behaviour is approached in future, to make reporting easier, and justice easier to attain.

I do not believe that there are any physical risks with taking part in this study. There are also no risks to your identity, as you will be completely anonymous in the study. We will however, be discussing some sensitive issues as is the nature of this topic. I will be as sensitive as I possibly can but please, if something does upset you, let me know and we can take a break or cease the interview process.

Only I will know what you have said. Your name will not appear anywhere in the research, you will be known only by a unique identifier for my own use. For example, IP001. I will also make sure that there are no identifiable characteristics about the data published, such as place names or the names of other people discussed. Any data which is stored will either be password protected (digital) or locked in a drawer (paper), with only myself able to access it.

If you have any questions or concerns then please contact me on [REDACTED]. I have also included the contact details of some support services at the end of the debrief form (you will get this after the interview has ceased).

Thank you for reading and I hope that you enjoy the research process,

Jordan Dawson
Postgraduate Researcher
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
Swansea University
[REDACTED]
Singleton Park
Swansea
SA2 8PP
[REDACTED]

Deborah Jones
Associate Professor
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
Swansea University
[REDACTED]
Singleton Park
Swansea
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My name is Jordan Dawson and I am a postgraduate researcher from the Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law, Swansea University. I am completing my PhD in Criminology, and the data gained from today's activity will contribute towards my study.

This research is about the experiences of men who transact sex, and is focused on incidents of violent and harmful behaviour. The researches main aim is to understand the reporting behaviour of men who experience this type of harmful behaviour, in order to encourage reporting of future offences.

You are being asked to take part in an interview about your experiences of working with male sex workers. The interview should take around 45-60 minutes depending on the level of discussion. If you do not want to participate, then no problem! This study is completely voluntary, but if you do have something to say, we will be happy to talk to you.

It is hoped that this research can help develop the way such behaviour is approached in future, to make reporting easier, and justice easier to attain.

I do not believe that there are any physical risks with taking part in this study. There are also no risks to your identity, as you will be completely anonymous in the study. We will however, be discussing some sensitive issues as is the nature of this topic. I will be as sensitive as I possibly can but please, if something does upset you, let me know and we can take a break or cease the interview process. Only I will know what you have said. Your name will not appear anywhere in the research and you will be known only by a unique identifier for my own use. For example, IP001. I will also make sure that there are no identifiable characteristics about the data published, such as project or place names or the names of other people discussed. Any data which is stored will either be password protected (digital) or locked in a drawer (paper), with only myself able to access it.

If you have any questions or concerns, then please contact me on [REDACTED]

Thank you for reading and I hope that you enjoy the research process,

Jordan Dawson
Postgraduate Researcher
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
Swansea University

[REDACTED]
Singleton Park
Swansea
SA2 8PP
[REDACTED]

Deborah Jones
Associate Professor
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
Swansea University

[REDACTED]
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Information for participants

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This research is about the experiences of men who transact sex, and is focused on incidents of violent and harmful behaviour. The researches main aim is to understand the reporting behaviour of men who experience this type of harmful behaviour, in order to encourage reporting of future offences.

You are being asked to take part in an interview about your experiences of policing sex work. The interview should take around 45-60 minutes depending on the level of discussion. If you do not want to participate, then no problem! This study is completely voluntary, but if you do have something to say, we will be happy to talk to you.

It is hoped that this research can help develop the way such behaviour is approached in future, to make reporting easier, and justice easier to attain.

I do not believe that there are any physical risks with taking part in this study. We will however, be discussing some sensitive issues as is the nature of this topic. I will be as sensitive as I possibly can but please, if something does upset you, let me know and we can take a break or cease the interview process. There are no risks to your identity, as you will be completely anonymous in the study. Only I will know what you have said. Your name will not appear anywhere in the research and you will be known only by a pseudonym. I will also make sure that there are no identifiable characteristics about the data published, such as project or place names or the names of other people discussed. Any data which is stored will either be password protected (digital) or locked in a drawer (paper), with only myself able to access it.

If you have any questions or concerns, then please contact me on [REDACTED]

Thank you for reading and I hope that you enjoy the research process,

Jordan Dawson
Postgraduate Researcher
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
Swansea University
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]

Deborah Jones
Associate Professor
Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
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[REDACTED]
Singleton Park
Swansea
SA2 8PP
[REDACTED]

Appendix P: Debrief form (phase 1)

You have reached the end of the survey.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part in this research.

I sincerely hope that your views and experiences will help inform the future direction of support and protection for men who transact sex, not only in terms of issues of violence, but for any relevant issues.

I do hope that you have enjoyed being a part of the research, but if for any reasons you do have any concerns or queries about the research please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED]. Alternatively, you can also contact my supervisor Debbie Jones on [REDACTED].

So what happens next?

As part of this research, I am looking to interview participants to expand on the issues discussed in this survey. If you would like to take part please follow the link: <https://goo.gl/forms/PDnb3YmNv8zCIdP43>.

If you would like to request a summary of the key findings when available, please send me an email stating so.

Once the research is complete the findings will be written up as part of a PhD thesis, which will later be published.

Further help

Just a few useful contact details should you need any further support:

- National Ugly Mugs: 0161 629 9861
- Armistead centre (Liverpool): 0151 247 6560
- Male Action Project (Newcastle): 0191 273 8891
- Pitstop+ (Sheffield): 0114 226 8888
- ROAM (Edinburgh): 0131 536 1773
- 56 Dean Street (London): 0207 812 1809
- SWISH (THT) (Coventry): 0247 622 9292
- The Rainbow Project (Belfast): 0289 031 9030
- The Men's Room (Manchester): 07582243701 / 0161 834 1827
- Promote (Bristol): 07741 385 576

All information taken from the website of the project or from the UK Network of Sex Work Projects website, and is accurate as of 08/02/2018.

Debrief form for participants

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part in this research.

I sincerely hope that your views and experiences will help inform the future direction of support and protection for men who transact sex, not only in terms of issues of violence, but for any relevant issues.

I do hope that you have enjoyed being a part of the research, but if for any reasons you do have any concerns or queries please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED]. Alternatively, you can also contact my supervisor Debbie Jones on [REDACTED].

What happens next?

- Once the research is complete the findings will be written up as part of a PhD thesis, which will later be published.
- If you would like to request a summary of the key findings when available, please get in touch and I can make sure that you receive a copy of the research summary.

Further help

Just a few useful contact details should you need any further support:

- National Ugly Mugs: 0161 629 9861
- Armistead centre (Liverpool): 0151 247 6560
- Male Action Project (Newcastle): 0191 273 8891
- Pitstop+ (Sheffield): 0114 226 8888
- ROAM (Edinburgh): 0131 536 1773
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- SWISH (THT) (Coventry): 0247 622 9292
- The Rainbow Project (Belfast): 0289 031 9030
- The Men's Room (Manchester): 07582243701 / 0161 834 1827
- Promote (Bristol): 07741 385 576

All information taken from the website of the project or from the UK Network of Sex Work Projects website, and is accurate as of 08/02/2018.

Debrief form for participants

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part in this research.

I sincerely hope that your views and experiences will help inform the future direction of support and protection for men who transact sex, not only in terms of issues of violence, but for any relevant needs.

I do hope that you have enjoyed being a part of the research, but if for any reasons you do have any concerns or queries about the research please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED]. Alternatively, you can also contact my supervisor Debbie Jones on [REDACTED].

So what next?

- If you would like to request a summary of the key findings when available, please send me an email stating so.
- Once the research is complete the findings will be written up as part of a PhD thesis, which will later be published.

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Want to have your say? We're listening.

My name is Jordan Dawson and I am a PhD Researcher from Swansea University.

My research is with **men who sell/transact sexual services**, and focuses on their **experiences of harmful behaviour committed against them**, such as violence, blackmail and time wasting. The main aim of the research is to **understand whether men report this behaviour against them, and what can be improved to help men report in the future.**

In writing this survey I have asked for the views of multiple **services, sex workers** and **academics** with excellent experience of researching sex work.

The first phase of this research is an online questionnaire which **asks questions about yourself, your experience of selling/transacting sex and your experience/opinion of the harmful behaviour of others.** The purpose of the survey is to inform interviews later on in the research, which you are also invited to participate in.

More information is available at the below link, but if you have any questions **please get in touch** via email or twitter. Details at the bottom of this flyer.

Point your smartphone camera at the QR code to get started or visit:
<https://bit.ly/2MbOenm>



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

There's still time. Have your say!





Over 18?
Experience of selling or transacting
sex?

We're looking for participants to take part in an interview focused on **harmful behaviours**, such as violence, blackmail and time wasting, **committed against sex workers**. The main aim of the research is to **understand whether men report this behaviour against them, and what can be improved to help men report in the future.**



If you are interested in getting involved, or want to know more, please get in touch:


[Redacted]

[Redacted]
(DM's Open)

Appendix U: Theme and concept mapping

| Chapter title - Vulnerable masculinities | | |
|---|---|---|
| Concept: | Description: | Themes: |
| The value of masculinity | This concept highlights where masculine characteristics were valued by the participants, or where the participants perceived others to value them, and the impact that this value subsequently may have. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender performances • Masculine hierarchies |
| Less masculine, more vulnerable? | This concept is centred around the participants discussions of less masculine, or more feminine, identities being considered to be more vulnerable. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender performances • Male vulnerability • Masculine hierarchies • Understandings of vulnerability |
| More masculine, still vulnerable? | In contrast to the previous concept, this presents a more open discussion of the vulnerability of men. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male vulnerability • Masculine hierarchies • Understandings of vulnerability |
| I'm not vulnerable, but I'll tell you who is | Centred on the hierarchies of masculine identities, it is evident that some of the men dismiss their own identity, whilst identifying the vulnerability of a less masculine figure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male vulnerability • Masculine hierarchies • Understandings of vulnerability |
| Protective masculinities | Within this concept, masculinity is discussed in terms of its protective characteristics. That is, how masculinity meant that the men did not feel vulnerable, or was used as a mechanism of demonstrating their ability to protect themselves. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender performances • Masculine hierarchies • Understandings of vulnerability |
| Vulnerable masculinities | This concept again is in contrast to the previous, highlighting where masculine identities and the pursuit of hegemony may increase the vulnerability of some men. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masculine hierarchies • Stigma • Understandings of vulnerability |
| Problematic masculinities | This concept focuses on how men are perceived and expected to act, and the impact that this may have on approaches to male vulnerability. This includes perceptions of men as the problem, rather than them requiring support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masculine hierarchies • Understandings of violence • Understandings of vulnerability |

| Chapter title – Behaviours and identities | | |
|--|---|---|
| Concept: | Description: | Themes: |
| Negotiating identity | This concept looks at how the men identified themselves in light of their work. Focusing on how the men talk about their work, their eagerness to discuss other aspects of their identity and their outright rejection of a sex work identity. There is also input from the practitioners who recognise the relationship that their service users have with the sex industry. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying as a sex worker • Men as sex workers • Multiple stigmas |
| Cruising for opportunity | This focuses more so on how the men interact with the industry when they do | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying as a sex worker • Opportunism |

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| | wish to transact sex. There were narratives of opportunism and professionalism which raised further discussion of identities. | |
| Inherently different? | Based upon the narratives which presented difference in how men and women engage with transactional sex, this concept questions the roots of perceived difference. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived differences between male and female sex work • Identifying as a sex worker • Opportunism |

| Chapter title – Experiences of, and responses to harm | | |
|--|---|--|
| Concept: | Description: | Themes: |
| The authority | This concept analyses the barriers which relate to authority figures, such as the police, the wider CJS and social services. It looks at how the behaviours of this system, and the subsequent perceptions of the men influence reporting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of judgement • Fear of criminalisation • Perception of the police • Past experience of the police • Wary of authority • Impact of policing approaches |
| The environment | The barriers within this concept relate to the wider environment and context within which both the authority and the individual themselves operate. The influence of stigma and the expectations of masculine identity are evident here. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma • Sex between men • Expectations of men |
| The individual | Influenced by both the authority and the environment, this concept homes in on the internalisation of and reaction to, these wider factors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anonymity • Lifestyle • Frequency of victimisation |
| Addressing barriers to reporting | This concept provides some tentative solutions based upon the above analysis and the narrative of the interviewees. There is also a discussion of how each of the three interrelated categories of barrier may require a particular approach and timeframe to overcome. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassuring anonymity concerns • Developing relationships • Supporting individuals • Avoiding moral judgement • Legal reassurances • Education • Tackling masculinity |

Instant messaging: A novel means of facilitating the participation of hard-to-reach groups in sensitive topic research

Purpose

As society becomes ever more reliant on internet technology for everyday communications, this paper explores the use of Instant Messaging (IM) in qualitative research. Discussed within the context of sensitive topic research with potentially hidden and hard-to-reach groups, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the value of adaptive and contemporary research approaches which facilitate participation on the terms of the participant.

Approach

Reflecting on the data collection process from the primary authors PhD research, this paper critically considers some of the issues raised by IM facilitated semi-structured interviews.

Findings

This paper raises a number of issues, including how the perceived depth of participant response is influenced by their brevity, resultant of the space between parties which allows for considered and concise communication. This disconnect, created by the use of technology, also has implications for the power relations between researcher and participant, and the ability to identify the non-verbal cues which communicate emotion and sentiment.

Value

This paper highlights that whilst limited in some respects, an IM facilitated interview provides a unique platform through which hidden and hard-to-reach groups may be empowered to participate in research, which they may otherwise avoid.

Context:

Hidden and hard-to-reach groups are terms that are often used interchangeably but seldom definitively defined. There are, however, some indicative characteristics shared by such populations. These might include, small population size and/or populations that are relatively widely dispersed; groups that experience acute socio-economic deprivation; those that are socially invisible; those that experience cultural or ideological and language barriers; and importantly, in the context of this study, have distinctive service needs and a suspicion of the police (Jones and Newburn, 2001). Therefore, whilst caution needs to be exercised around ensuring such terms do not become stigmatising, the identification of such characteristics aid researchers in their endeavours to understand some of the complexities in developing appropriate methodologies. This may be particularly important where the hidden or hard-to-reach group remains wary of research attention from perceived ‘outsiders’ (Dewey and Heineman, 2013). This paper argues the importance of research respecting this position, and of striving to provide an environment in which the target demographic feels enabled to participate and have their voices heard. As primary author, this paper reflects upon the data collection process of my PhD study which took place between August 2018 and February 2019, and as such, will be presented from my perspective. I suggest that Instant Messaging (hereafter referred to as *IM*) provides a means by which hidden and hard-to-reach groups are empowered to participate in research, which they may otherwise avoid.

The research study aims to understand the reporting behaviour of male sex workers who experience violence or otherwise harmful behaviours. The male role within sexual commerce has typically been understood as the purchaser of services, with dominant discourses favouring discussions which limit the focus on male sex workers. Indeed, within the policy context in England and Wales, much of the approach is informed by a radical feminist discourse

(see Home Office, 2004; 2006), and presents sex work as an issue of violence against women and children, primarily perpetrated by men (Whowell, 2010). This is despite the consistent finding that men make up at the very least, a significant minority of those selling sexual services in England and Wales, particularly when mapping the online market (see Sagar *et al.*, 2014; Sanders *et al.*, 2018). This focus on women has meant an emphasis on their support needs, rendering there scant support available for male sex workers nationally (Bryce *et al.*, 2015). With this, and a policy framework which places the male role as primarily that of driving the demand sex work (see Home Office, 2008), men within the industry often go under acknowledged, under supported and under protected.

Male sex workers in England and Wales, like their female counterparts, are subject to a legal premise best described as foggy. The sale of sexual services between consenting adults, albeit legal in itself, is constricted by related offences which mean that many interactions between a sex worker and client will involve a criminal action (Pitcher and Wijers, 2014). Coupled with this legal complexity, is the idea that sex work stigma is combined with the assumption that male sex workers exhibit sexual behaviour with other men, amplifying the stigma faced by male sex workers (Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013). Resultant of these issues, many sex workers do not disclose their work (Weitzer, 2018; Pitcher, 2015). Therefore, there is some challenge in both identifying and successfully building research relations with men involved in sex work. What has been apparent is the importance of utilising adaptive and contemporary approaches to research, which both respect the position within which sex work sits socially and provides a platform for sex worker voices which is flexible enough to facilitate preferable conditions of participation.

Methods:

Despite focusing predominantly on female sex workers, a consideration of the methodological approaches of the existing sex work related literature is nonetheless important in developing a framework conducive to an ethical and valuable study, mindful of the reality faced by many of those who transact sex. Drawing upon existing approaches, and acknowledging that those invited to be involved in the research are experts in their own reality, the methodological approach of this study drew upon forms of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and consulted sex workers at every stage of its formation. A PAR approach facilitates knowledge co-construction, rather than maintaining traditional researcher-led notions (O'Neill, 2010). This links to feminist methodologies and principles of gender equality, using participatory methods and supporting the researcher to engage with structural inequalities and issues of power (Fine, 2007; Krumer-Nevo, 2009). Sex worker voices were not just present within the data generated but were also fundamental to the development of the questions being asked themselves (Van Der Meulen, 2011).

The study was structured into four phases, beginning with an online survey developed with the consultation of two male sex workers, support services and academics. The survey informed three later phases, involving interviews with male sex workers, support service practitioners and the police. For this initial phase, the sampling strategy involved a Twitter campaign, designed to reach potential participants through my established network of followers. Bearing similarities to a snowball sampling approach, the strategy relied on the endorsement or 'retweeting' of the study by other Twitter users, who essentially were able to utilise their established online presence to assist in reaching those within their network who may have been interested in participating.

Ethical approval was secured from the host institution. In addition, with reference to the vulnerability and difficulties of working with hidden and hard-to-reach groups, recruitment

was defined by participatory principles, beneficence, non-maleficence and informed consent. An information sheet and consent form were sent via the participant's preferred mode of contact (email, IM) and all data was stored according to GDPR.

The Use of Semi-structured Interviews:

Phase Two of the research involved exploring the views and experiences of men who had at some point sold or transacted sex in more detail. Given my own status as an outsider, and my relative naivety to the reality faced by these men, I deemed a flexible conversation based upon these experienced voices to be the most appropriate approach to learning more about their reality. I adopted a semi-structured interview technique in line with previous research informed theoretically by feminist approaches, which highlight the insensitivity and rigidity of more structured and 'masculine' data collection methods which do not address the potential power issues between the researcher and participant (Punch, 2014). The flexible nature of a semi-structured approach encourages divergence and exploration within a conversation, both acknowledging the researchers position as being limited to the facilitator of discussion and respecting the position of the participant as expert of their own reality (Fedyuk and Zentai, 2018; Campbell, 2016).

Furthermore, modern conversations are held in more ways than ever before, and as a society we are becoming far less limited to traditional notions of face to face contact. With this reality and the potential difficulty in reaching participants considered, I took a flexible approach to delivering the semi-structured interviews. Participants had the opportunity to engage by meeting face to face, through video call, over the telephone and over text through IM or email. Each method of delivery followed the same interview guide, and there were only slight procedural differences.

IM Interviews and case study:

On many modern IM interfaces, users have access to their messages at all times through their smart devices. IM has become less associated with synchronous conversation, and more synonymous with continuous sporadic conversation. Differing to other forms of electronic conversation, an IM is designed to mimic real life conversation and individual messages between users are often brief.

There are multiple ways of communicating available through IM, including via text, images and screenshots, GIFs, Emoji and other multimedia. I was able to send documents required for informed consent, and any other relevant information, without leaving the apps interface. The participant and I also had multiple methods of expressing ourselves within the conversation, which are discussed in further detail below.

The interview primarily reflected on here, was with a 39-year-old participant, given the pseudonym Nathan. I contacted Nathan just after he had followed my professional account, through Twitter's direct messaging service. I asked whether he would be interested in hearing more about the research, and consequently he agreed to take part in an interview. I then outlined the various means in which we could continue our conversation, and Nathan, conscious of his anonymity, highlighted that communicating via email would be preferable. Nathan however, raised his concern that his email address would identify his real full name, whereas his Twitter account used a pseudonym. I felt that offering him complete peace of mind may improve his trust in both the research and me, so I offered to continue our conversation through Twitter. An email or IM conversation using a different platform would have borne great similarity to Twitter direct messaging in that we would be communicating asynchronously via text online; but by keeping contact through the already established channel, Nathan remained anonymous.

Our messages were sporadic in nature, with the conversation taking place over a number of days. We did not allocate time specifically for the interview as would have been the

case with meeting face to face or calling via telephone or Skype, but instead we replied to the other's messages when we could, as we might have done with any other mobile conversation. By using the Twitter application on my mobile phone, I was notified directly of any new messages from Nathan. For much of the interview I was on a short break at a holiday park, and despite the patchy signal at that location, we maintained the conversation throughout the weekend. Despite my fear of the interview becoming frustrating for Nathan, with the conversation heading into the back end of the weekend, we covered the intended schedule and addressed further issues which were raised during the interview. Nathan commented that it was 'nice to have a chat about it' as he 'don't often get the chance', before sending me a screen shot of a message which he deemed to be from a potentially risky prospective client after the interview guide had been covered.

Deeply concise discussion:

Qualitative research effectively addresses the 'natural setting' and explores lived experiences of individuals in great depth and detail (Creswell, 2009). This natural setting now includes the widespread use of digital messaging across a range of platforms. One of the concerns that I had going into an IM interview surrounded the level of detail which the participant would relay, compared to more traditional means. Although our conversation was not bound by character limits, as public tweets are, responses tended to be limited to a few sentences. This was particularly noticeable when compared to data collected during a telephone interview, with a superficial consideration of the length of the two transcripts suggesting that the IM interview may lack depth. Indeed, the word count for the IM interview stood at 3376 words, whereas the telephone interview contained 7449.

The length of the transcript and the depth of discussion are not congruent however, given IM chat by its very nature is a shortened variation of communication, with users often

sending messages which include abbreviations and 'text speak'. For example, an IM user may use 'IMO' instead of 'in my opinion' or 'TBH' in place of 'to be honest'. The responses within the IM interview, rather than lacking depth, were simply concise.

Previous research on IM interviewing has noted that it is within the etiquette of the method to expect a delay between the question and answer, often because of the time it takes to type a response (Fontes and O'Mahoney, 2008). The asynchronous nature of IM conversation dictates that a participant is afforded space between question and answer, where they are able to consider their response and amend where applicable.

In contrast, the pause between question and response within the telephone interview was more limited, giving the respondent less time to consider their answer and no facility to immediately amend their spoken word [1]. Reflecting on the telephone interview, there were a number of instances where the participant had begun talking, before stopping mid-sentence and changing the direction of their narrative. This was not common within the IM interview, where Nathan had the time to ponder his response, review his typed text and make amendments before sending the message. Nathan's narrative may have appeared to be limited in terms of depth when viewed superficially, however in actuality the quality of the data gained was largely similar to the telephone interview, once transcribed and analysed.

Importantly within the IM interview, the space which facilitated a more thought out response from the participant was also offered to me as researcher. This meant that any follow up questions were well considered, as I had time to ponder Nathan's response and develop a pathway which would encourage further discussion (Partington, 2001). Rubin and Rubin (2005) discuss how follow up questions can also be introduced in later interviews once the researcher has transcribed and reviewed the data, noting areas which could be explored in more detail. One advantage of the IM interview format is that the transcript is saved within the chat, is readily available during the interview and can be reviewed as the discussion continues. The

reflections which may have been raised post interview, as in the telephone interview, could therefore be raised whilst an IM participant is still engaged within the discussion.

With space available to review the data and contemplate any follow up response, it is reasonable to argue that any output which digressed from the interview schedule would assume a certain considered quality, which perhaps the more spontaneous response of the telephone interview assumed in lesser quantity. Although at a superficial level there may be questions raised about just how much depth of discussion the IM interview may encourage, the space created by the disconnect between parties supported a valuable discussion, with the conversation delving into topics and producing data of a rich quality, whilst holding on to an element of considered brevity.

Language beyond words:

Mariampolski (2001) suggests that body language and other non-verbal communications are essential to human interaction, expressing approval, emotion, interest and comfort, often without intending to. Of particular significance to this research were non-verbal cues which may have suggested discomfort. The nature of the subject matter and the potential for the interview to delve into sensitive and perhaps upsetting topics required my specific vigilance to signs of distress (Silverman, 2000). Rodriguez (2018) highlights the observation of non-verbal communications as being key to a better understanding of participant experience within sensitive topic research, therefore questions may be raised about just how appropriate an IM based interview may be for such research.

Evidently an IM approach cannot provide the same level of expression through body language as face to face interaction would, with both parties involved in the interview separated by the technology (Aida, Faruz Ain and Woolard, 2019). Though unexpectedly, perhaps naively so given my own daily interaction with online communication, Nathan and I were able

to communicate a body language of sorts through the medium of Emoji. Emoji are images which depict a variety of facial expressions, actions, items and symbols, which are available to the majority of smartphone users. The true value of Emoji is that they are able to ‘convey a complexity of emotions that cannot translate easily into words’ (Alismail and Zhang, 2018: 3367). There are limits to the expression of emotion within a typed message, with the text open to the interpretation of the receiving party. The inclusion of an Emoji, although also open to the interpretation of the receiving party, gives some indication of the nature of the message being sent outside of the written word (Durante, 2016).


Both Nathan and I made use of Emoji to express certain characteristics of our narrative which would likely not have come across in plain text. For example, when describing advertising his services online, Nathan said:

A lot of us have to make our own content.. my selfie skills are amazing compared to 2 years ago 😂 🤔 [2]

The first emoji, understood to be ‘the face with tears of joy’ was voted as the word of the year in 2015 by Oxford Dictionaries (Time, 2015), signalling the light-hearted nature of this excerpt of the conversation. The second, named as the ‘man facepalming’ emoji, has often been interpreted as resembling the popular online saying of ‘SMH’ or ‘shaking my head’ and is synonymous with a feeling of embarrassment or perhaps disbelief (Emojipedia, 2019a). The combination of the two Emoji may somewhat demonstrate the friendliness of the conversation, and also provide the reader an indication beyond the typed word as to the emotion with which Nathan had sent the message. My own interpretation of the Emoji use places Nathan as disbelieving of his own participation in ‘selfies’ or rather, good ‘selfies’, and perhaps indicates

some level of perception that this behaviour transgresses some masculine stereotypes, with ‘selfie’ taking more commonly associated with more feminised identities (Dhir *et al.*, 2016).

Another example of our use of Emoji came when I asked Nathan to describe sex worker - police relations. Before discussing the fact that he had never been in contact with the police himself, and that he felt that the police would rather focus their attentions on ‘dealers & traffickers’, Nathan highlighted where his work might sit on the spectrum of the sex industry:

At my end of the industry which I guess is mid to high end..?  [2]

The expression beyond typed words used by Nathan here, is described by Emojipedia as the ‘man shrugging’ Emoji (2019b). Shrugging one’s shoulders is typically understood to demonstrate indifference or indecision. Although the exact meaning is again open to the interpretation of the reader, my understanding of the use of Emoji here is that Nathan was demonstrating a degree of modesty, leaving it up to me to decide exactly where on the sex work spectrum his work sits. In this context a shrug of the shoulder in person would have had much the same effect, indicating that the use of Emoji can go some way in compensating for a lack of visual non-verbal cues in a semi-structured interview setting.

It is debatable however, whether the use of IM and Emoji is a sufficient substitute to real life interaction and non-verbal cues for understanding and monitoring participant experience within a research interaction. Indeed, what is presented within our conversation is a filtered version of non-verbal communication, where we only shared the emotions which we chose to. Body language is often shared without intent, we may communicate a certain emotion in our words but contradict ourselves with our non-verbal cues (Mandal, 2014). Although the IM interview and its Emoji capabilities provided a form of communication beyond written text,

it is limited in the sense that I could only observe what was made observable to me, and I would have missed any discomfort which was not made explicit by the participant themselves.

Related to this, there is scope for further research to explore the additional meanings drawn from IM communication, such as the length of time taken between responses. As an example, the length of time spent typing (demonstrated by the typing indicator within most IM interfaces) may potentially reveal clues as to the depth of thought required to answer a question or prompt, which again indicates meaning outside of the typed word.

The dynamics of research interaction:

The power dynamic between a researcher and participant can impact the data collection process and the subsequent narrative presented in the written work. It is suggested that within traditional research relations the power balance is typically asymmetrical (Fahie, 2014), with the researcher credited with the thought process which constructs the study and the participants with the material to be studied (Reason, 1994). As an approach to researching with potentially vulnerable groups and addressing sensitive subject matter, this has drawn criticism for being too rigid and limiting the focus on the voices of the groups under study (Doucet and Mauthner, 2012). In a feminist approach, action is taken to minimise the power differences or inequalities between participant and researcher (Fine, 2007).

The issue of power within this research bears particular poignance when the potential vulnerability and marginalisation of the participants is considered alongside my own identity as a straight, white, university-attending male. With the research interactions described within this paper limited to those between myself and male participants, the issue of power is less likely to rest upon notions of gender inequality but steer more towards the notions of masculinity which interactions between men tend to be grounded upon (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001). Connell (1987) introduces the concept of a hierarchical structure of

masculine identities, with hegemonic masculinities retaining dominance over other forms of masculinity and femininity. Despite our shared male status, power differentials may have arisen from the position in which our masculine identity sat within this proposed hierarchy. For example, behaviours which digress from the heteronormative ideal have been considered as a subordinate form of masculinity, because of the perceived femininity of sexual interactions between men (Jewkes *et al.*, 2015; Connell, 2018). Although male sex work and homosexuality are not inextricably linked, with straight men's involvement in sex work noted within previous research (see Ellison and Weitzer, 2017; Minichiello, Scott and Callander, 2013), there is often a presumption that their work will involve some degree of intimate contact with a male client. Even for a straight male sex worker, the hierarchy of masculinities may have influenced the power dynamic of the research interaction in the sense that their behaviour rather than their identity deviated from the societal masculine ideal (see Connell, 2018).

Significantly, the interview discussed here was with a man who seemed to largely conform to the heteronormative masculine ideal. Nathan, a straight 39-year-old white man with a strong build and a background in the armed forces and private security, described how his work involved seeing single women and heterosexual couples. On this basis, the power dynamic within the interaction may present itself as balanced, though our discussion may have revealed details of experiences or attitudes which challenged his masculine identity and thus may have upset any balance of power. The flexibility offered within my approach meant that I was able to yield power at almost every point in the research, allowing those involved to set their own terms of participation. The interview with Nathan was a particular example of this, where a remote technologically facilitated approach created a 'virtual space' between researcher and participant. Jones (2014) describes this space as removing any fear of judgement an individual may have when approaching a discussion of a sensitive issue. Within the

conversational nature of the interview, Nathan felt comfortable enough to deviate from the schedule, discussing other more humorous aspects of his work and insisting that:

I feel I could tell you some crazy stories 😂 [2]

The true potential of the IM interview in balancing the participant-researcher power dynamic may be better observed within a research relationship where there is a more recognisable power imbalance, though my experience demonstrates the methods potential to facilitate friendly and natural-feeling conversation, even when approaching sensitive topic research.

Questions of validity:

Validity within a research context is often concerned with whether the study is able to produce a truthful account of the reality of its participants (Peräkylä, 2016). The ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this work acknowledge that reality and truth is dependent on the individual. The feminist foundations upon which this research is built emphasises the importance of the reality of those who have direct experience of the issue in question (Doucet and Mauthner, 2007). The researcher's role, interpretive in nature, involves drawing from the participant an account of their own reality.

Earlier discussions highlighted the space which is created between the two parties, and the potential for this to reduce the impact that a researcher may have on the process, though this same space may have some implications for the validity of the account provided by the participant. An IM interview introduces an increase in the time expected to elapse between the question and response, which is in part responsible for this space. With more time for the participant to deliberate, and potentially filter their response to only what they want to be known, it is reasonable to assume that details could be left out. Volda and colleagues (2004)

discuss this delay between the researcher's question and the participant's response and suggest that this may have brought about an element of self-censorship to their research. Of course, self-censorship is not an issue limited to online communication in itself, but with the time and space afforded to the participant in this technique, questions may be raised about the version of reality which is to be presented. By comparison, the telephone interview did bring with it a certain raw response, with the participant in this instance responding to prompts with only minimal pauses for thought, as is the nature with this form of communication.

The spontaneity of the response within telephone interviewing is considered to be one of its strengths by Opdenakker (2006), with initial reactions to a question or prompt perhaps revealing further details of a participant's wider feelings around a subject alongside their spoken answer (Knapik, 2006). However, in research which touches upon sensitive topics, having less time for self-censorship may mean that the participant avoids entirely an issue which they are not comfortable approaching. Censorship in this instance may present as a strength rather than something which is problematic about the approach. Indeed, Opdenakker (2006) continued their discussion by suggesting that asynchronous communication between the researcher and participant led to what they believed to be richer and more honest responses in comparison to the more spontaneous accounts.

The reality of an IM approach is that although the chance of censorship may be heightened when the participant is given the time to consider their response, it is difficult to determine whether this has a significant impact on the truthfulness of the response when compared to more synchronous methods of communication. Like with the issue of response depth, a superficial observation of the IM interview and its asynchronous nature may present as problematic, particularly when considered alongside traditionalist in-person interview methodologies. However, as discussed here, the method offers unique advantages to both

researcher and participant and importantly, by facilitating participation in a way which suits them, we allow participants to present their reality on their own terms.

Concluding thoughts:

Throughout this research, the intention has been to place an emphasis on obtaining the expertise of men engaged with transactional sex, through utilising an adaptable approach with the participants preference at heart. The adaptability was intended to help balance any issues of power, in line with previous research informed theoretically by feminist approaches. Whilst it is acknowledged that the method may not be preferable for all of those approached, the inclusion of IM took away the requirement for the participant to identify themselves; utilising instead their already established alias profiles. Whilst useful for the research at hand, the use of IM does come with limitations which have been highlighted throughout this paper. Notably, the limited ability to communicate non-verbally and any related ethical considerations should be deliberated, particularly in sensitive subject research. Conversely, it is this very disconnection between the researcher and participant which gives strength to the method, offering a space in which participants who may have avoided the study ordinarily could have their voices heard without fear of judgement.

Maintaining an adaptable research outlook led to conversations which may have been blocked by more a rigid approach. As technologically facilitated asynchronous communication becomes increasingly utilised in everyday life, perhaps as researchers we are obligated to adapt our approaches to become more fitting with the current state of communications in real life, and remain grounded in the lives of our subjects.

[1] Participants were later given the opportunity to review and amend the transcript of their interview.

[2] All Emoji are taken from Twitter and are open source.

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