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Constructing identities through discourse: Examining the textual representation of prostituted women in post-apartheid South Africa

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Constructing identities through discourse: Examining the textual representation of prostituted women in post-apartheid South Africa.

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Masters in Community Based Counselling Psychology - Research Report

Supervisor: Dr Clare Harvey

A Research Report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Community Based Counselling Psychology (by Coursework and Research Report)

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Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signed: 

Tiaan A Landman

Date: 29 March 2021

Abstract

The current study explores the intersectional social identities of four 'prostituted women' in post-apartheid South Africa as they are represented through discourse. The socio-cognitive model of critical discourse studies is employed to explore the way in which their social identities are represented through texts. These texts were retrieved from the online blog of a non-profit organisation, *Embrace Dignity* (2019), which advocates for the rights of women and girls. The texts were written to represent the personal experiences of four black women who identify as 'prostituted'. This study found, through the engagement with biopolitical and intersectional feminist theory, that conditions which are paramount to a 'social death' are often proliferated for the subjects at the intersection of their gender, sex, sexual, and racial identities. Furthermore, these conditions are often concealed through the guise of class. The subjects make meaning of their social identities through a range of experiences, which are facilitated by sociohistorical systems of oppression aimed to disenfranchise feminised and blackened bodies in South Africa. These systems of oppressions are communicated through discourses of Bantu education, unskilled labour, violence, sexual perversion, limited access to services, marginal citizenship, geography, movement, and displacement, as well as a discourse of care, to name a few. The study found that these discourses are fostered and realised through the political project of domination, enforced by white heteropatriarchy that was institutionalised by the apartheid government. The study further indicates how the women who are represented by the texts, have been positioned within contexts that supress their lives. This study emphasises the importance of exploring the intersectional social identities of black prostituted women in order to appropriately support the women within this community and their voices.

Keywords: *biopolitics; critical discourse analysis; intersectionality; prostituted women; sex work*

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Glossary of relevant terms

Agency

"Agency refers to the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act", that is informed by personhood, desire, and intentionality (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112).

Cisgender

People whose gender identity is coherent with the naturalised meaning attached to the sexed body that they were assigned at birth (Cava, 2016).

Gender

A biologically deterministic social system of the masculinisation and feminisation of bodies through processes of normalising behaviours (Butler, 1988). Gender is intimately associated with sex, which is regarded the biologically determined categorising system of humans based on their reproductive functions (Pryzgoda & Chisler, 2000). Literature has shown that gender norms are intimately bound to race (Arvin et al., 2013).

Heteronormativity

A social system organised around heterosexuality, which naturalises sexual attraction between men and women as a necessary and compulsory condition of humanity (Jackson, 2006; Jolly, 2011). It is theorised that heteronormativity positions the skewed division of power amongst feminised and masculinised bodies as natural (Jackson, 2006).

Heteropatriarchal

A social system that considers heterosexuality and patriarchy as natural and biologically determined (Arvin et al., 2013). This term is considered relative to heteropaternalism, which is

considered a nuclear-domestic arrangement of the man-woman dyad within the family structure. Heteropaternalism arranges men as dominant and women as subservient within the man-woman dyad (Arvin et al., 2013).

Identity

The current study conceptualises identity through two theoretical positions. The first being a biopolitical approach to identity, in which identity is understood through the dominant rationalities that are deployed onto the material existence of the human (Campbell & Sitze, 2013; Mills, 2015). The second theoretical position is intersectional feminism, or intersectionality – terms which are used interchangeably throughout the current study. The intersectional approach understands how social identities (e.g., gender, race, and class) overlap within systems of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989).

Moral politics

The term 'moral politics' is regarded as the conceptual framings of morality which are pertinent in political agendas (Nadesan, 2011).

Neoliberalism

An extension of capitalist theory, which promotes that all human action can be operationalised as marketable activities (Harvey, 2005).

Patriarchy

A configuration of society that draws out, and exaggerates, the differences between masculinised and feminised bodies in order to position men as dominant and women as subservient (Arvin et al., 2013).

Power

The current study understands power within the Foucauldian sense, where power is inextricably related to knowledge (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). In the dialectical understanding that knowledge is power, knowledge refers to the construction of realities, through language. This process of defining reality constructs dominant rationalities that inform the way people understand the world and orientate themselves within it (Foucault & Hurley, 1990).

Prostituted woman

A form of self-identification by the women within the data of the current study, which encumbers entry into the system of prostitution as necessitated by class inequality and patriarchal forces of oppression.

Prostitution

The term 'prostitution' refers to labour that is informed by gender, sexuality and race (Musto et al., 2015). This is a form of labour that encompasses an economic arrangement where sexual services are offered for compensation (Musto et al., 2015). Prostitution is recognised as socially stigmatised through moral judgement (Kruger, 2004).

Sex work

A neoliberal conceptualisation of prostitution (Mathieson et al., 2016). Sex work is regarded as sexual labour, where a person consensually engages in sexual services for financial – or other forms of – compensation (Musto et al., 2015). Literature often understands that this term is less stigmatised than terms such as 'prostitute' (Kruger, 2004), while remaining deeply gendered, sexualised and racialised (Musto et al., 2015).

Sex worker

A person who engages in sexual services for financial – or other forms of – compensation (Musto et al., 2015).

Transactional sex

The act of engaging with sexual activity for financial or other compensation (Dewey, 2012).

Chapter one: Introduction and rationale

National and international literature has witnessed various conceptualisations of systems of prostitution[1] and sex work[2] (Cho et al., 2013; Musto et al., 2015). South African literature is generally organised around two dominant bodies of knowledge. The first is the sex work, or prostitution, perspective that is informed by choice based and ethical prostitution (Bettio et al., 2017). The second is the sex trafficking perspective, which encumbers coerced and unethical prostitution. These bodies of knowledge tend to be simultaneously conflated and dichotomised within the literature. Its conflation occurs when the systems of oppression that are experienced by sex workers[3] are organised under the banner of sex trafficking. This simultaneously dichotomises sex work and sex trafficking, disregarding the systems of oppression within sex work discourse through its conceptualisation as choice based and ethical (Bettio et al., 2017).

Generalising those who sell sex within the discourse of sex trafficking invites a misunderstanding of sex work as human trafficking (Yingwana et al., 2019). The current study acknowledges the reality of sex trafficking within South Africa and the inhumane conditions thereof (Gould, 2011). Concurrently, South African literature has indicated that a small percentage of those who sell sex experience the conditions of exploitation and abuse that necessitate the criteria for sex trafficking (Gould, 2011). The misunderstanding of sex work as sex trafficking distorts the experiences and risks of both parties, as their oppression is

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[3] People who engage in sexual services for financial - or other forms of - compensation (Musto et al., 2015).

misinterpreted through discourse and legal-political frameworks (Walker & Oliveira, 2015). South African authors have noted that there exist numerous complexities within the intersectionality of those who sell sex (Walker & Oliveira, 2015). Positioning these complexities within the sex trafficking discourse, places sex workers on a singular axis of oppression (Walker & Oliveira, 2015). This is especially concerning considering the wealth of literature that supports the theoretical orientation of intersectional feminism (see: Canham, 2017; Collins, 1990, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Walker & Oliveira, 2015).

Literature has evidenced that social identities are distorted when positioned through the guise of a singular axis of oppression (Collins, 1990, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). The current study employs intersectional feminism to explore the textual identities of those who sell sex, as they have been represented online. This is presented in response to the general discourses in academic and popular literature that characterise those who sell sex as victims of sex trafficking (Bonthuys, 2012; Gould, 2011). This misrepresentation has directed the current study to a gap within the literature. Yingwana et al. (2019) recognise this gap, asserting that the nuanced realities of those who sell sex are often negated within debates organised around sex work and sex trafficking. In order to develop a nuanced understanding of the lived realities of those who sell sex, the current study considers the socio-historical conditions of South Africa's social environment. It is through these socio-historical conditions that the current study observes how South Africa's population has been fragmented and hierarchically organised into an economy of power[4] (Mbembe, 2003).

[4] The current study understands power within the Foucauldian sense, where power is inextricably related to knowledge (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). In the dialectical understanding that knowledge is power, knowledge refers to the construction of realities, through language. This process of defining reality constructs dominant rationalities that inform the way people understand the world and orientate themselves within it (Foucault & Hurley, 1990).

The current study employs the socio-cognitive model to critical discourse studies to the above stated purpose. The scope of South African research that applies a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to the representation of those who sell sex has been minimal. Only two studies were found during the review of literature (see: Bonthuys, 2012; Hubbard & Hunt, 2015). These studies are organised around the moral-political agenda of media reports as they relate to women who sell sex. The current study is not intended as a commentary of the moral-political aspects of the sex trade industry. It is noted that a moral political-analysis is fruitful as it emphasises particular strategies to meaning-making and the normalisation of knowledge in society. However, this study is interested in the way that otherwise ambiguous markers of difference are organised in a political existence through historical processes.

The experiences of black women from the working class who sell sex, are explored within this study. Literature argues that black women from the working class are multiply burdened within the matrix of domination and subordination (Crenshaw, 1989). National and international literature indicates that the experiences of black women are often silenced, overlooked or distorted (Crenshaw, 1989; Motsemme, 2002). South African literature has expressed that the racialised construction of gender[5] often promotes white femininities, as it relates to the female sexed body, which generates normalising forms of being for white – but not black – women (Motsemme, 2002). In effect, the interlocking systems of gender and race that have been operationalised to reinforce the tradition of South Africa's colonial history, has functioned to marganalise the particularity of black women's experiences (Modiri, 2017). It has been argued that colonial-apartheid power relations inform South Africa's current sociopolitical

[5] A biologically deterministic social system of the masculinisation and feminisation of bodies through processes of normalising behaviours (Butler, 1988). Gender is intimately associated with sex, which is regarded the biologically determined categorising system of humans based on their reproductive functions (Pryzgoda & Chisler, 2000). Literature has shown that gender norms are intimately bound to race (Arvin et al., 2013).

and legislative landscape (Modiri, 2017). The current study positions this understanding within the experiences of black women from the working class, who sell sex. It is further understood that these experiences inform a process of racialising, or blackening, the material existence of the body (Jackson, 2020).

The current study is situated in the social context of South African legislation, which criminalises the buying and selling of sexual services. Literature portrays that the criminalisation of transactional sex[6] is a project that seeks to eradicate the sex trade industry (O'Neil & Scoular, 2007). It is argued that this is a political project which exists within the framework of a neoconservative ontology (Mathieson et al., 2016). Similarly, South African authors have witnessed that some media representations of those who sell sex, as presented by the news outlet *The Sowetan*, often marginalise those who sell sex through neoconservative discourse (Hubbard & Hunt, 2015). This political project seeks to consolidate a national identity[7] that is organised around the collective social values and morality of greater society (Mathieson et al., 2016; Scoular & O'Neill, 2007). In turn, those who sell sex are positioned within a discourse of sexual perversion, as their behaviour contradicts the institutionalised norms of sexual behaviour (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). Literature argues that the process of marking those who sell sex as sexually perverse is informed by a colonial and imperial process that disenfranchises certain groups of people within the greater population (Scoular & O'Neill, 2007).

[6] The act of engaging in sexual activity for financial or other compensation (Dewey, 2012).
[7] The current study conceptualises identity through two theoretical positions. The first being a biopolitical approach to identity, in which identity is understood through the dominant rationalities that are deployed onto the material existence of the human (Campbell & Sitze, 2013; Mills, 2015). The second theoretical position is intersectional feminism, or intersectionality – terms which are used interchangeably throughout the current study. The intersectional approach understands how social identities (e.g., gender, race, and class) overlap within systems of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989).

It is understood that the criminalisation of sex work establishes a relationship between sexuality, deviancy and perversion through discourse and the law, which establishes a mechanism of power over the life of those within the sex trade. Literature proposes that this is a function of normalisation, that serves to establish dominant rationalities which create the parameters through which human and social life is understood (Mills, 2015). This is a process through which a dominant knowledge is embedded in the fabric of existence, which concurrently institutionalises the practices of domination and subordination. To this regard, the body is understood as site for political intervention (Campbell & Sitze, 2013). Therefore, the current study adopts biopolitical theory, as means to appropriately identify the manner in which the material existence of the human is made meaningful through discourse.

It should be noted on the outset of the current study that a complexity exists amongst characterising terms such as 'prostitute' and 'sex worker'. I acknowledge the tension within the discourse that these terms evoke as characterisations of those who sell sex; these terms are used reflexively throughout the current study. They are not evaded from this study, as they are understood to be a critical component of this study. The current study is not an attempt to assume the identities of those who sell sex. However, the limitations of language ensue me to use terms such as 'sex worker' and 'prostituted women'[8]. The term 'prostituted women' is used as an alternative to the more politically acceptable discourse of 'sex work' within data of the current study. As noted within the glossary of relevant terms, the terms are observed as a form of self-identification by the women within the data of the current study. It is used to highlight the coercive nature of the social conditions that facilitate entry into the sex trade industry for the

[8] A form of self-identification by the women within the data of the current study, which encumbers entry into the system of prostitution as necessitated by class inequality and patriarchal forces of oppression.

women represented by the texts. Furthermore, characterisations such as 'those who sell sex' is not a neoliberal[9] attempt to convey that prostituted bodies are marketable and economised commodities. Moreover, the data obtained within the current study is organised around the experiences of black womanhood in South Africa. This presents particular tensions within the research process, which are elaborated on in Chapter three. The current study understands that terms which serve to characterise a person's identity are flexible and multidimensional (Crenshaw, 1991). Any characterisation within the research is not deterministic and should be viewed as flexible.

Aims of the study

The current study aims to explore the textually represented identities of black prostituted women, who are represented by texts found within the public domain, through employing the socio-cognitive model of critical discourse studies. This study aims to develop an understanding of how the material existence of the black prostituted women represented by the texts are organised into an economy of power. The study engages with the complexity of intersecting categories of identity through incorporating the theoretical contributions of biopolitics and intersectionality. The textual processes of meaning making within discourse in relation to sociopolitical structures are examined as a response to literature that often renders the identities of those who sell sex on a singular axis of oppression.

Structure of the research report

The first Chapter introduced the current study. A rationale was provided, which contextualised the relevance and potential of the research. Thereafter, I presented the aims of the

[9] An extension of capitalist theory, which promotes that all human action can be operationalised as marketable activities (Harvey, 2005).

research. The second Chapter engages with the theoretical orientation of the current study. As such, theorisations of biopolitics and intersectionality are explored. The biopolitics of race and sexuality are of particular interests to the research. Following the theoretical framework, relevant literature on those who sell sex, and black womanhood is reviewed. The second Chapter is concluded through providing the research question which is answered in the fourth Chapter. Chapter three addresses the methodological approach of the study. The manner in which the socio-cognitive model of critical discourse studies was operationalised is discussed, as well as issues concerning reflexivity and ethics. The fourth Chapter presents the findings and discussion relative to the research question. The study is concluded in Chapter five, which provides a summation of the current research as well as its strengths, limitations and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter two: Theoretical framework and literature review

Introduction to the theoretical framework

The current study employs biopolitics and intersectional feminism as its theoretical perspectives to understand how sex workers' identities are textually represented. These theoretical perspectives are introduced within the following section. The section illuminates how the human is drawn into an economy of power. Biopolitics provides the current study with an oversight to the processes of power, which inform dominant rationalities about the material existence of the body. Intersectional feminism supplements the reading of biopolitics through its conceptualisation of interlocking systems that inform oppression. Together, the theoretical contribution of biopolitics and intersectionality provide a meaningful reading of the politicisation of human life.

Biopolitics

Biopolitics remains a rather elusive concept, with great debate throughout the literature of Foucault's intended conceptualisation (Mills, 2015). The use of the term 'biopolitics' is traced throughout Foucault's work. However, it is argued that its theorisation remains speculative and incomplete (Coleman & Grove, 2009). Publications such as the 'History of Sexuality' and Foucault's Lecture series: 'Society Must be Defended'*;* 'Security, Territory and Population'; and *'*The Birth of Biopolitics' all reference these terms in differential ways. As stipulated by Campbell and Sitze (2013), "there exists no perspective that would allow us to survey and measure the lines that together constitute the concept's theoretical circumference" (p. 2). This provides the reader with the opportunity to expand the conceptualisation of biopolitics in creative ways that are relevant to their biopolitical landscape (Campbell & Sitze, 2013). As such, this section does not serve as a summary of writings on biopolitics. Rather, the opportunity is seized

to explore the biopolitical field. The theoretical perspective explored within this section incorporates a body of literature within the biopolitical. This includes perspectives such as the decolonial work of Mbembe (2003), who re-imagines biopolitical theory to establish what he devises as necropolitics.

The Foucauldian conceptualisation of Biopolitics serves to question the politicisation of human life (Campbell & Sitze, 2013; Mills, 2015). It reveals the ways in which human life has been subjected to political expressions of power. That is, the manner in which the material existence of the human is organised into a political existence (Mills, 2015). This is a strategy of governing through the deployment of dominant knowledge that focusses on the regulation of populations and the management of human life (Quinan & Thiele, 2020). Mills (2015) argues that biopolitics operates at two simultaneous levels: 1) the level of individual bodies and 2) of the emergent nature of subjectivity and subjective experience of the population. This form of power resides simultaneously within the individual body and the population at large. To this regard, biopolitics is viewed as an operation of knowledge that seeks to characterise the population at large within a dominant rationality (Cisney & Morar, 2015). This is done through the construction of a dominant rationality within the population, which views human life as greater than its biological existence (Campbell & Sitze, 2013). However, this conceptualisation of human life situates it within a political agenda. For Foucault et al. (2008) this is a political project that questions how to optimise human life in response to the needs of the dominant group.

Foucault's account of biopolitics is intimately bound to his genealogy of power. For Foucault, the antecedents of biopolitics is the sovereign's capacity to take life or let live (Mills, 2015). This is otherwise characterised as the sovereign's ability to seize hold over the life of

subjects in order to supress it (Hook, 2007). During the rule of the sovereign, subjects were comprehended as a hierarchically organised people defined by their relation to the sovereign (Quinan & Thiele, 2020). Biopolitics is regarded as a reformism of the sovereign's governance over the population (Cisney & Morar, 2015; Mills, 2015). The sovereign's authority over human life, through their right to death, evolved into a political project of fostering life or disallowing it to the point of death (Mills, 2015). This project intended to see subjects fructify and prosper if they could function within the appropriate parameters of the social norms, established by the state (Mason, 2009). In more popular literature, Mason (2009) argues that these norms were developed as a function of biological essentialism. For example, the enforcement of racial norms came to ensure a supposed racial and biological purity within the biopolitical project of racism (Mason, 2009). Concurrently, the naturalisation of a dominant sexuality (heterosexuality) within the twentieth century ensured the productive and reproductive capacities of the subdivided human species (Repo, 2013). The current study's utility of the theoretical work is an attempt to understand how biopolitics manifests within the textual representation of the identities of prostituted women. This is emphasised in the following section, which explores Foucault's writing on the biopolitics of racism (Foucault et al., 2008).

Biopolitics and racism

Foucault et al. (2008) describes the genealogy of racism as a fragmentation of the population, which has enabled a biological-type separation within society. This has served to treat the population as a grouping of hierarchically subdivided species (Foucault et al., 2008; Repo, 2013). Biopolitical racism does not seek to address race in itself; rather it refers to the ambiguous divisions amongst the human species that has resulted from a history of racialisation

(Cisney & Morar, 2015; Repo, 2013). It is within these divisions that the biopolitical landscape of race operates.

As the biopolitical project of race persists, it becomes synonymous with the goal of excluding another 'race' from life itself (Cisney & Morar, 2015). It is within the political interest of the 'subspecies' that asserts itself as dominant to view any other 'subspecies', who have been split off from them, as threatening (Foucault et al., 2008). The biopolitics of race seeks to explain why certain members of the population are continuously excluded from civil and political participation, despite their numerous attempts for inclusion (Cisney & Morar, 2015). Repo (2013) extends the biopolitics of race through an analysis of the interconnected nature of sexuality and race. It is argued that the intimate relationship of sexuality and race constructs conditions that support the lives of some, while inhibiting lives of others. To this regard, biopolitics enables an understanding of the ways in which racialisation and sexualisation have created disproportionate rates of unemployment, imprisonment, crime, and disease (Cisney & Morar, 2015). It is within the subdivision of the population, and unequal power distribution amongst different groups within the population, that the aforementioned matters become statistical anomalies, normalised within politics.

These biopolitical processes create the opportunity for inequality, which manifest within a symbolic arrangement of society (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). It exemplifies why society is organised within life zones and death zones, as described by Cisney and Morar (2015). Life zones are conceptualised as symbolic spaces which ensure the preservation of an individual and their political function (Cisney & Morar, 2015). Life zones are concurrent with the life function, which is regarded as the facilitation of the reproduction of the population (Repo, 2013). In contrast, death zones are conceptualised as the symbolic spaces in which wasted lives are

exposed to conditions that ensure a status of alienated humanity, such as exposure to disease and violence. Death zones are concurrent with the death function, which is defined as "[…] the tactical and strategic facilitation and suppression of life" (Repo, 2013, p. 2).

Mbembe (2003) supplements the work of Foucault within his theorisation of necropolitics, in which he theorises the precarious living conditions that many people are forced into. Together these theories characterise the manner in which some people are systematically positioned into death zones (Quinan & Thiele, 2020). In his theorisation, Mbembe (2003) questions the manner in which the human body is positioned in the order of power; thus, bringing into question how the human body is subjugated to conditions of death. This form of death is not merely understood as physical death but also social death, creating a condition of living described as 'the living dead' (Mbembe, 2003). People who find themselves within these precarious living conditions are regarded as unproductive to the neo-liberal and neo-imperial political agenda (Quinan & Thiele, 2020). Literature indicates that the death function can be characterised through discourses of exclusion and oppression (Repo, 2013).

As previously noted, biopolitics operates within the individual in as much as it seeks to optimise the individual so that they may function effectively within the parameters of societal normalcy. In regard to the population, it seeks to promote the continuity of population through reinforcing these parameters. This is otherwise understood as the conditions of being that endorse effective functioning. Authors such as Hook (2005) often regard that the hallmark of this normed identity is parallel to the Western-Eurocentric middle-class cisgendered[10] heterosexual white man. In rendering the biological features of the body as political, a disintegration of the

[10] People whose gender identity is coherent with the naturalised meaning attached to the sexed body that they were assigned at birth (Cava, 2016).

population occurs. Simultaneously enforcing strategies of subordination and domination that serves the preservation of one group, while excluding the other (Cisney & Morar, 2015). The normalisation of the biopolitical project inherent in hierarchically categorising identity serves to naturalise domination and subordination as a condition of human existence.

Intersectional feminism

Intersectional feminist scholars have similarly observed the fragmentation of society through the characterisation of identity that draws the human into an economy of power. The current study adopts the writings of Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Collins (1990, 2019) within the theoretical framework to meaningfully understand how sex workers are positioned within the systems of domination and subordination. Intersectional feminism conceptualises systems of privilege and oppression as interlocking (Collins, 2019). Hierarchies of gender, class and race have been extensively studied by black feminist authors (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990, 2019). However, the systems of privilege and oppression are various, with research identifying religion, health, sexual orientation, nationality and migration as some of the systems of privilege and oppression (see: Collins, 1990; Logie et al., 2011; Walker & Oliveira, 2015).

Crenshaw (1989) argues that understanding oppression from a single axis distorts the complex realities that subordinated groups face. This distortion leads to a systematic erosion of multiply-burdened groups (Collins, 2019). Traditional perspectives view systems of (for example) race, class and gender as discrete (Crenshaw, 1989). This is problematic in comprehending the complex experiences of groups who are multiply burdened. Once a group who is multiply-burdened is perceived through the gaze of the singular axis of oppression, their subordination persists as they are inappropriately understood.

Crenshaw (1989) applies this conceptualisation to the experiences of black women. She observes that black women are often excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policies as their experiences tend to be subjugated to the experience of the most privileged groups who they are categorised with (Crenshaw, 1989). This occurs because the experience of the most privileged group is often conceptualised as the norm within discourse. This means that traditional feminist perspectives that broadly refer to women, tend to emphasise the experiences of white women. Womanhood has historically been constructed through racialised discourses that prioritise whiteness. As such, black women have historically been excluded from the discourse of womanhood. Therefore, whiteness is centralised as the baseline of experience within the discourse of womanhood. This has eroded black women from discourses of womanhood. Alternatively, the experiences of heteronormative[11] black men are often centralised within discourses of blackness (Crenshaw, 1989). The current study understands that these groups experience forms of oppression; however, they are also privileged for their respective whiteness and/or their masculinity (see Crenshaw, 1989).

This study extends its understanding of the ambiguous, biologically determined divisions within the population through the introduction of intersectional feminism to biopolitics. Class as an interlocking system of oppression can be conceived as a consequence of the establishment of biopolitics. To this regard, economic disempowerment illustrates a political project which inhibits particular groups within the population to prosper within civil and political institutions (Gqola, 2015). Literature notes that the intersection of economic disempowerment, racial and

[11] A social system organised around heterosexuality, which naturalises sexual attraction between men and women as a necessary and compulsory condition of humanity (Jackson, 2006; Jolly, 2011). It is theorised that heteronormativity positions the skewed division of power amongst feminised and masculinised bodies as natural (Jackson, 2006).

gender inequality is a function of dehumanisation within white capitalist, white supremacist and heteropatriarchal[12] societies, as is the case in South Africa (Gqola, 2015).

Review of literature

Introduction to review of literature

The literature review locates itself within the major debates regarding the criminalisation, decriminalisation, and legalisation of sex work, as well as its relative feminist theories. Such literature provides important insight in understanding the operation of legal-political agendas and its impact on identity. It is understood that legislation maintains a normalising function within society, as laws explicitly dictate the conditions of identity, through characterising that which ought to be considered as normal and abnormal within a respective society. Normalisation is fundamentally intertwined with the institutions and force of the law (Mills, 2015). Literature regarding sex work indicates particular ontological approaches in society's production of discourse relative to the sex trade industry. These ontological approaches have an implicit impact on the social arena, including the laws that govern sex work. It should be noted that I adopt the term 'sex work'/ 'sex worker' within the review of literature, as most academic literature corresponds with this terminology. However, the term prostitute will be used where it is relevant to the literature.

Several ideological positions are explored throughout the review of literature. These ideological positions have a particular impact on how women's bodily integrity and autonomy is conceived. The first perspective introduced to the review of literature, includes the Judeo-

[12] A social system that considers heterosexuality and patriarchy as natural and biologically determined (Arvin et al., 2013). This term is considered relative to heteropaternalism, which is considered a nuclear-domestic arrangement of the man-woman dyad within the family structure. Heteropaternalism arranges men as dominant and women as subservient within the man-woman dyad (Arvin et al., 2013).

Christian framework which tends to perceive women who sell sex as immoral sexual subjects whose bodies and identities are characterised by perversion. This perspective is often reflected in more conservative societies that criminalise sex work. Another ideological position aligns with the body of literature that views people who sell sex as sex workers. Premised within this position, women who sell sex are generally conceptualised from a neoliberal ideological framework as labourers. They are viewed as empowered sexual subjects that actively practice their right to liberty and autonomy. This perspective is often reflected in literature that advocates for the legalisations of sex work.

The legalisation of sex work is generally met with the tension of the theoretical body that aligns with the sex-trafficking perspective, which views sex work as sex trafficking. The body of literature that reflects sex trafficking often regards women who sell sex as disempowered and exploited sexual objects. The sex trafficking perspective tends to perceive women who sell sex as a social group characterised by vulnerability. These women are limited by their sociopolitical and economic conditions. This perspective is often reflected in literature that advocates for the decriminalisation of sex work. International discourse tends to distinguish women who sell sex within two categories, either within ‘sex work’ or ‘sex trafficking’ (Bettio et al., 2017). Literature notes that ‘sex work’ represents choice-based or ethical prostitution; whereas ‘sex trafficking’ represents forced or unethical prostitution (Bettio et al., 2017; Mathieson et al., 2016). It is important to take note that these conceptualisations are introductory to establish the relevant scope of the literature review. They will be explored in greater detail within the following review.

The review of literature further locates itself within the numerous discourses relative to the sex trade industry and the identities of sex workers in the South African context. The scope

of South African research that applies critical discourse studies (CDA) to the representation of sex workers has been minimal. Two South African studies that employed a critical discourse analysis were retrieved during the review of literature and will be detailed (see: Bonthuys, 2012; Hubbard & Hunt, 2015). South African research within the field of sex work tends to examine the construction of gender within the sex trade industry, systems of racialisation and the economic dimension of sex work. In order to fully comprehend these intersecting dynamics, the literature review examines the body of literature that regards the history of black women's oppression. This is particularly important as sex workers within South Africa are often characterised as black women. To this regard, the review of literature includes the sociohistorical and political conditions that black women have experienced within the family and the labour market. It should be noted at the outset that terms such as 'sex worker', 'prostitute' and 'prostituted women' are all forms of self-identification within the sex trade industry. These terms are used according to the relative conceptualisation within a study that is referred to in the discussion below.

The Judeo-Christian perspective

Judeo-Christianity expresses that any form of sex trade is immoral (Mathieson et al., 2016; Scoular & O'Neill, 2007). Literature acknowledges that this ideological position characterises a person selling sex with a deficient moral character (Mathieson et al., 2016). This view developed within heteronormative, patriarchal[13] and religious traditions, where the female body is objectified as a site of temptation. Contrarily, the male body is perceived as dominant and insatiable. Authors such as Mathieson et al. (2016) argue that this portrayal of the female

[13] A configuration of society that draws and exaggerates the differences between masculinised and feminised bodies in order to positions men as dominant and women as subservient (Arvin et al., 2013).

body is born from the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, which characterises women's nature as inherently sinful (Mathieson et al., 2016). Arguably, this tradition conceptualises the existence of the sex trade industry as an extension of supposed women's sinful nature, rather than men's supposed insatiable desire (Mathieson et al., 2016). Here, the sex trade industry is portrayed as synonymous with the female body (Mathieson et al., 2016). The argument presented within this body of knowledge contributes to literature concerning the criminalisation of prostituted individuals, as well as that which has been titled 'morality politics' (see: Altkin & Wagenaar, 2012).

Altkin and Wagenaar's (2012) conceptualisation of morality politics introduces an important perspective to sex workers' social positionality. In their view, morality politics operates to police "[…] aspects of birth, death, and the body, such as contraception, abortion, physician-assisted suicide, or prostitution […]" (p. 281). The literature in the field of morality politics has noted the stronghold influence of religion in politics (Altink & Wagenaar, 2012; Engeli et al., 2012), where issues regarding morality are of little importance to societies in which religion does not have a prominent role (Engeli et al., 2012). Similarly, Scoular (2010) through her articulation of governmentality and power based on Foucauldian principle, argues that current laws have been adapted from repressive juridical systems. That is, historical repressive legal models have been adapted towards more productive models (Scoular, 2010). Little research has investigated the legitimacy of the legal regulation of sex work from such a perspective in South Africa. Some research suggests that the specific historical conditions of apartheid have influenced notions of gender and sexuality (Carolin, 2017; Ratele, 2008, 2009). Literature observes that historic oppressive laws, such as discrimination based on race and sexuality, are often socially reinforced through cultural customs (Bhana, 2010; Moolman 2013; Morrisey 2013;

Ratele 2009; Swarr 2012). However, these studies were not conducted within the domain of sex work.

Foucault and Hurley's (1990) seminal writing on *The History of Sexuality* provides a more insightful understanding of the argument presented here. These authors understand that discourses circulating the construct of sexuality tends to focus on sexual perversion. These discourses are not limited to women's supposed sinful nature, as Mathieson et al. (2016) suggest, but include discourse relevant to sexual deviancy, such as child sexuality and queer sexuality and are often relative to biopolitics. Foucault and Hurley (1990) understand that society deems certain forms of sexuality as perverted within the Judeo-Christian religious tradition; these sexualities are often marginalised within society. Thus, it is argued that a normed sexuality is established through dominant discourses, which simultaneously marganalises those enactments of sexuality that deviate the perceived norm. This creates a relationship between sexuality, deviancy and perversion which establishes a mechanism of power over life. Relative to the theoretical framework within the current research, here power is understood from a biopolitical perspective. From this perspective power over life is regarded as the ideologies which are internalised and practiced by subjects and concurrently governs the norms of sexuality (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). The discipline of the body becomes quite pertinent within this argument, as sexual behaviour and attitudes are normalised and equated to a healthy sexuality and an unhealthy sexuality (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). The social construct of sex and sexuality is internalised as essential to identity (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). The discourse of perversion shapes a social landscape in which the subject comes to understand their existence in terms of 'a healthy sexuality' and an 'unhealthy sexuality' (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). The unhealthy sexuality is often connotated to disorder, disease and unlawfulness. In this capacity, sexual

perversion is constructed as detrimental to the preservation of the body and its life. However, Foucault and Hurley (1990) remind us that this is a relative truth born from the discourse of sexuality within conventional morality where sexuality is repressed by the interest of the bourgeois class.

The politically charged debates regarding the legal status of sex work (e.g., Cohan & Lutnick, 2009; Raguparan, 2017) clearly convey the conservative, religious influence within the South African legal system. Literature contextualised in Africa has noted that the legal framework which regulates sex and sexuality has a specific impact on identities (Todd-Gher, 2014). Todd-Gher (2014) writes on the experience of African women, articulating that criminal laws and policies are increasingly being used to police the particular expressions of gender and sexuality. The literature review indicates that the relationship between law and identity within the context of those who sell sex in South Africa's patriarchal social order remains an area for potential research.

Abolitionist feminism

Feminist authors who maintain the abolitionist perspective similarly regard the exploitive nature of sex work. They note that sex work is often the manifestation of economic inequality between men and women, in which women's subordinated economic position forces them into 'unfavourable' labour (Dewey, 2012; Kesler, 2002; Satz, 2010). At the core of this argument is that the economic disempowerment often faced by women is rooted in oppressive patriarchal systems (Dewey, 2012; Kesler, 2002; Satz, 2010). Consequently, sex work is the result of female subordination (Comte, 2014; Waltman, 2011). Women's bodies are exploited and violated because of the male demand for sex work (Comte, 2014). The male demand for sex workers is therefore the driving force of the sex industry. Some authors argue that this view considers

female sex workers as victims to misogynistic regimes of patriarchy (Comte, 2014). Further that it denies these women the ability to freely make decisions as it conceptualises sex work as forced labour, which is not always true (Comte, 2014; Dewey, 2012; Ditmore, 2010). It is argued that the abolitionist perspective distorts the experience of female sex workers (Benoit et al., 2018; Comte, 2014). As Gangoli (2008) notes, there is an array of contributing experiences that should be taken into consideration when understanding sex workers. These may be psychological, sociological and educational (Robinson, 2007). Cavalieri (2011) opposes this universalised view, noting that it does not consider the contextual particularity of women within the sex trade industry. To this regard, literature within the abolitionist framework may disregard the interlocking systems of privilege and oppression which subjugates those who are multiply-burdened such as black women who are economically characterised as working class (see: Crenshaw, 1989). The current study identifies the necessity of exploring the interlocking systems of privilege and oppression within the domain of sex work. This is a call to develop a comprehensive understanding of the sociopolitical and historical processes that impact the identity of those who sell sex in South Africa from a genealogical perspective.

Criminalisation

The criminalisation of transactional sex is an attempt at the eradication of sex work. This is a project that aims to consolidate a particular national identity, as informed by historic colonial powers (Scoular & O'Neill, 2007). Literature widely acknowledges that the criminalisation of transactional sexual services is founded within Judeo-Christian and abolitionist ideological frameworks (Comte, 2014; Mathieson et al., 2016; Scoular & O'Neill, 2007; Scoular, 2010; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). Within this project, the various parties involved in transactional sex

(those who sell, buy or organise it) are criminalised (Vanwesenbeeck, 2017), as is the case in South Africa's Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act 32 of 2007.

The literature generally emphasises the experience of sex workers, particularly female sex workers, as they are argued to be the most vulnerable amongst the cohort of criminalised parties (Baratosy & Wendt, 2017; Benoit et al., 2018; Moran & Farley, 2018). The criminalisation of female sex workers perpetuates the Judeo-Christian ideological framework and accordingly stigmatises female sex workers as having 'spoilt identities' (See: Goffman, 1963). This conceptualisation views the identity of the stigmatised as polluted in relation to a normalised population of people. The naturalisation of the normalised population occurs through the perpetuation of the so-called 'abnormality' of the stigmatised population (Goffman, 1963). Sex workers are represented as behaving immorally and unlawfully by the legal systems which criminalises the buying and selling of sexual services (Baratosy & Wendt, 2017; Ditmore, 2010; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). Academic literature concerning the juridical criminalisation of sex work has conceded that criminalisation is underpinned by the historic belief that participation in sex trade is a consequence of immorality, which requires social intervention (Mathieson et al., 2016). Mathieson et al. (2016) argue that the traditional views reported here presently manifest within neo-conservatist societies. Neoconservatism confines individual freedom through the collective social values and morals of the greater society (Mathieson et al., 2016). Thus, issues of morality are intervened through the force of government and military (Mathieson et al., 2016).

In the attempt to eradicate the sex trade industry through its criminalisation, sex workers are left with little access to social services. This tends to reinforce the conditions that often lead individuals into the sex trade industry (Cohan & Lutnick, 2009; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). Mathieson et al. (2016) identify that legislation within the United States of America relative to

sex trade is often gender neutral, however, women are disproportionately sanctioned. They contend that women's disproportionate legal sanctioning is a consequence of the Judeo-Christian and heteronormative patriarchal tradition that reinforce men's dominance and subsequent access to greater social freedoms (Mathieson et al., 2016). Feminist authors remark that the conditions of the subordination of the female body is reinforced, leaving women at the mercy of patriarchal regimes of power (Gqola, 2015; Motsemme, 2002). While the impact of criminalisation is popularly justified by the assumed exploitative nature of sex work, various authors have noted that it enables extreme discrimination against those who sell sex (Baratosy & Wendt, 2017; Dewey, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). Ditmore (2010), in concurrence with Vuolajärvi (2018), goes as far as to say that the criminalisation of sex work allows for the violation of various other rights.

A systematic review conducted by Plat et al. (2018) examines the manner in which laws pertaining to the sex trade industry enforce a symbolic regime that render those who sell sex within a category of non-citizenship. The study assumes a neo-liberal position toward sex work as labour, emphasising the risk factors which sex workers are exposed to within societies that criminalise sex work. This concurs with a range of authors who argue that sex workers are at greater health risks, including infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual or physical violence from clients or intimate partners, and unprotected sex (Deering et al., 2013; Erausquin et al., 2011; Maher et al., 2011; Odinokova et al., 2014; Plat et al., 2018). Plat et al. (2018) indicate that these risks are exacerbated by the nature of policing within countries where sex work is criminalised such as India, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Spain; Russia, China, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe. Those who sell sex are unable to access appropriate health care

services due to a range of variables, including police brutality toward prostituted individuals, clients and third parties who organise transactional sex (Plat et al., 2018).

The literature indicates that the threat of violence forces prostituted individuals into isolated and dangerous work locations that disrupts risk reduction strategies, such as screening and negotiating with clients, carrying condoms, and working with others (Plat et al., 2018). This indicates that prostituted individuals are forced to geographical movements where they can be rendered as invisible, in an attempt to reduce risk of harm from repressive police practices. It is reported by Scorgie et al. (2013) that these repressive practices often violate the basic human rights of those who sell sex, through unlawful arrests, extortion, physical and sexual violence by police officials, forced HIV testing, as well as withholding access to resources such as legal aid and public health care. These repressive practices are indicative of the manner in which violence and stigma against sex workers are institutionalised and legitimised in order to render them as invisible (Plat et al., 2018). These sociopolitical factors that characterise sex workers within an alienated humanity encourages climates of under-reporting crime and injustice (Plat et al., 2018). It further constitutes a social arena where prostituted individuals are viewed as marginal citizens, undeserving of protection, care, and support, especially in societies where the criminalisation of sex work is enforced (Plat et al., 2018). These factors are further impacted by fears that sex workers have of prosecution and moral judgement in relation to non-conforming sex or sexuality, drug use, eviction from their homes, and deportation in the case of migrants (Plat et al., 2018).

Decriminalisation and the Nordic model

The decriminalisation of sex work is popularly adopted by South African social movement campaigns such as the *Sex Work Education and Advocacy Task Force* (*SWEAT*)[14] and *Embrace Dignity*[15], along with various national and international feminist authors (see Dewey, 2012; Ditmore et al., 2010). Some argue that the decriminalisation stance is rooted in the "ambition to support the empowerment of sex workers as workers and to reduce the stigma on sex work" (Vanwesenbeeck, 2017, p. 1631). The decriminalisation stance advocates for the removal of some legal articles criminalising sex work (Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). This permits some, not all, forms of commercial sex with a legal status (Cohan & Lutnick, 2009). While sex work remains juridically sanctioned, government puts in place legislation to control and regulate it (Comte, 2014). Vanwesenbeeck (2017) asserts that the decriminalisation of sex work is premised on the intentions to regulate sex work in a 'law and order' manner.

However, literature calls for the decriminalisation of sex work through application of the Nordic Model (see: Howard, 2018; Kingston & Thomas, 2019; Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011; Vuolajärvi, 2018). These authors assert that the Nordic model is an equitable movement towards women's equality in society. This depiction of the Nordic model views sex work as the unequal power distribution between cis gendered men and cis gendered women within a patriarchal society. The Nordic model is a means to reduce women's vulnerability and consequential exploitation within sex trade (Howard, 2018; Kingston & Thomas, 2019; Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011; Vuolajärvi, 2018). The model aims to abolish commercial sex by criminalising the buying of sexual services while legalising the selling thereof. The Nordic model seeks to eradicate sex

[14] http://www.sweat.org.za/
[15] http://embracedignity.org.za/

trade through placing criminalising conditions on buyers within the industry (Vuolajärvi, 2018). This encourages an ideological shift that focusses on the responsibility of buyers, through arguing that women's equity depends on removing the structural barriers that inhibit women's participation in economic, social, and political institutions (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). Sex trade is reduced through legally inhibiting buyer's, or more specifically men's, contribution towards the sex trade industry (Vuolajärvi, 2018). It is further argued that the Nordic model approaches sex work as violence against women and sends a symbolic message that women's bodies are neither objects nor sexual commodities (Vuolajärvi, 2018). Therefore, the model directly addresses the social action of buyers which semiotically reinforces the subordination of women in society (Vuolajärvi, 2018). However, the literature regarding the Nordic Model provides some indication of major discrepancies, as will be explored shortly.

Feminist authors argue that decriminalisation is a necessary movement within the legal framework, as sex workers are often viewed as 'illegal' and stigmatised accordingly (Comte, 2014). The stigmatisation of sex work, perpetuated through criminalisation, impacts various facets of sex workers' lives, such as access to public health care, police services and workplace protection (Cantin, 2006; Ditmore, 2006, 2010; Mensah, 2006). Previous literature has argued that once sex work is decriminalised sex workers' intersectional positionalities could become less constrained (Baratosy & Wendt, 2017; Cohan & Lutnick, 2009). They would be able to gain access to the fundamental social services (Baratosy & Wendt, 2017; Cohan & Lutnick, 2009). Decriminalisation would establish state level control, where the sex work industry could be better regulated by government (Dewey, 2012). Research has indicated that the application of the Nordic model has created a fallacy that sex work is treated equally within these countries (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). An analysis of the ideological differences within law reform and

regulation that occur in Iceland, Norway and Sweden has shown that this is not the case (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). Dewey (2012) notes that the local authorities who administer the social services which would be provided are often unwilling to do so. This disparity between policy and implementation which have been witnessed in decriminalised contexts are due to negative attitudes toward sex workers (Altkin & Wagenaar, 2012; Dewey, 2012). Therefore, decriminalisation may allow sex workers a better quality of life only when it is appropriately implemented, such as in the case of New Zealand (see: Altkin & Wagenaar, 2012).

In critically assessing the work of authors such as Skilbrei and Holmstrom (2011) and Kingston and Thomas (2019), it becomes apparent that the implementation of legislation does not guarantee the application thereof. Fieldwork by authors such as Kingston and Thomas (2019), as well as Vuolajärvi (2018), have indicated that the regulatory environment is often guided by sociocultural norms rather than legal guidelines. The application of law by legal agents is often influenced by sociocultural mores within the participating community (Kingston & Thomas, 2019). Canadian literature has highlighted that the legislative system does not accurately capture the oppressive conditions that people who sell sex face (Vuolajärvi, 2018). In exploring the conditions of those who sell sex, the author argues that a double standard can easily emerge. In the case of migrants who sell sex, a legislative shift occurs that further oppresses foreign sellers of sexual services (Vuolajärvi, 2018). In light of Vuolajärvi's (2018) writing, the significance of the intersectional matrix of social, political and economic inequality becomes quite pertinent. It is understood that Canada's legal framework approaches those who sell sex from a single axis of oppression, which inadvertently further subordinates migrants as they become targets of punitive immigration -party laws (Vuolajärvi, 2018). Simultaneously,

nationals are privileged through improved access to resources that migrants are excluded from (Vuolajärvi, 2018).

Literature indicates that sources of inequality within the matrix of domination and subordination are rendered invisible in dealing with people who sell sex (Scoular & O'Neill, 2007; Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011; Vuolajärvi, 2018). In prioritising cis-sexual women, numerous reasons for participation within the sex trade industry is overlooked within legislation (Scoular & O'Neill, 2007). Social measures may merely reinforce the oppressive conditions of those who sell sex. The diverse nature of the sex trade industry within postmodern societies is often overlooked and has led to the hierarchisation of the sex trade industry (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). A study conducted in Sweden concurs, expressing that interventions toward migrant's who sell sex are often much more punitive (Siring, 2008, as cited by Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). To this regard, research has found that locations such as Nevada, USA who have adopted the decriminalisation framework regulates the industry in a discriminatory manner (Altink & Wagenaar, 2012; Baratosy & Wendt, 2017; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). In so doing, sex workers are further marginalised due to highly restrictive regulations (Cohan & Lutnick, 2009). This means that sex workers and the sex trade industry is regulated in ways that are not experienced by other forms of labour (Cohan & Lutnick, 2009). Literature has emphasised that the nature of sex work policy operates to further marginalise vulnerable populations (Kingston & Thomas, 2019; Plat et al., 2018).

Sex work and legalisation

Mathieson et al. (2016) explore the sex work position, emphasising that the term refers to any activity within sex trade as valid labour. The position is premised within the ideological underpinning that women have the capacity to act with autonomy. Thus, arguing that women

have the right to their body and should be empowered to act with liberty. Sex work, therefore, advocates that any interaction within the sex trade industry should be considered as a business activity in which women should gain access to the appropriate labour rights (Mathieson et al., 2016). The position is born from the ideological framework of Western neoliberalism that promotes all human action as marketable activity (Harvey, 2005). In this regard, neoliberalism is an extension of capitalist theory that advocates for free markets, free trade, and strong individual property rights (Harvey, 2005). Literature concurs, expressing that neoliberal societies enable sex workers as individuals with personal choice and individual freedom that can make informed decisions, where they consent to a profitable demand for sex (Clarke, 2004; Mathieson et al., 2016). Howard (2018) contends that the sex work position is often absorbed into arguments that reflect the legalisation of sex work.

Importantly, the sex work position should not disavow the reality of coerced prostitution (Howard, 2018). Rather, legislation must understand and clearly identify the distinction between sex as labour and criminal activities within the sex trade industry. This correlates with countries, such as the Netherlands, who have aligned with the neoliberal ideological framework and accordingly adopted a legalising framework of sex work that concurrently expresses sex positive views (Mathieson et al., 2016). The position argues that there are no asymmetries of power or structural barriers that restrict a person's liberty when participating in transactional sex (Mathieson et al., 2016). The literature asserts that prostituted individuals are often victimised and consequently disempowered when they are viewed as objects of social, political and economic inequality (Mathieson et al., 2016). Therefore, in approaching sex work as a social problem a feminist-humanitarian discourse develops in which those who sell sex are represented as victims of their circumstances and require the assistance of bourgeois resources to improve

their conditions (Vuolajärvi, 2018). The Netherlands opposes this view within its legalising framework of sex work as it approaches sex workers as professionals that deserve equal rights (Mathieson et al., 2016).

Governance and regimes of care

Literature indicates that discourses and practices that are centred around oppressed populations are often legitimised by the suffering of those populations (Fassin & Gomme, 2012). The suffering of the oppressed is often rendered within the political gaze as a site of intervention (Fassin & Gomme, 2012). Humanitarian governance is, therefore, conceptualised as the deployment of moral sentiments which is premised within empathy and compassion towards the oppressed (Fassin & Gomme, 2012). In reporting the function of humanitarian governance and its impact on sex work, Vuolajärvi (2018) reflects on the work of Fassin and Gomme (2012). The authors argue that contemporary politics encumber moral sentiments (Fassin & Gomme, 2012). The rise of humanitarian governance is inherently related to the "circulation of sensationalist images and narratives of sex trafficking, which compel spectators to take action" (Vuolajärvi, 2018, p. 12). The conceptualisation of commercial sex within the social arena shapes the limits and possibilities to how government deals with it as a social problem (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). South African literature by Bonthuys (2012) concurs, noting that the ideological framing of sex work adopted by advocacy groups such as *SWEAT*, often organises its campaigns around ideas of moral panic. This framing encourages interpretations for sex workers as individuals who are in danger of violence, trafficking and other forms of victimhood, therefore magnifying discourses of oppression (Bonthuys, 2012). The humanitarian intention of the decriminalising perspective promotes the conservative agenda through its appeal to morality politics.

Authors such as Ticktin (2011) argue that humanitarian governance of vulnerable populations are at the cost of increased surveillance, policing, and violence towards these populations. As 'regimes of care' are constituted by government, they invariably create the conditions which reinforce their suffering (Ticktin, 2011). This occurs because vulnerable populations are continuously positioned as victims in need of governmental aid (Ticktin, 2011). Ticktin (2011) argues that they are not perceived as bearers of equal rights, rather the continuous circulation of discourses of vulnerability reproduces racial and gendered hierarchies. Vuolajärvi (2018) concludes that the governance of vulnerable populations embodies paradoxical politics of compassion and inequality that are reflected in punitive policies.

The recognition of sex work as a moral epidemic has been locally assessed by Bonthuys (2012), who analysed sex work representations in news outlets during the 2010 Soccer World Cup. The author notes that South African media often generates discourse of trafficking and child sexual exploitation in connotation to sex work. Moreover, sex work is highly gendered as feminised labour. This establishes grounds for public concern regarding the protection of women and children who are likely to fall victim to individuals who exploit the sex industry. In this regard, media often refers to sex workers as being victim to human trafficking (Bonthuys, 2012). International authors have witnessed similar patterns, such as Raguparan (2017) in a Canadian study, as well as Bettio et al. (2017) in Europe. Bonthuys (2012) concludes that the general South African public maintain a view of sex work that is organised around moral panic. That is, public anxiety in response to a perceived threat to the moral standards of society (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995). The alarm for the rights of women and children are not treated with the same urgency as the need for media to demonise the sex work industry (Bonthuys, 2012). Sex workers are essentialised as victims (Comte, 2014). Their identities are characterised by popular

representations of victimhood (Bonthuys, 2012). They are often represented on a single axis of oppression, in which the multidimensionality of their experience (in terms of race, gender and class) is overlooked (Beloso, 2012).

The oppression of the female body

The literature which has been discussed hitherto indicates anomalies with reference to the oppression of feminised bodies within the sex trade industry. However, literature often lacks a biopolitical engagement with these topics. The following section is a multidisciplinary engagement with the discourse of oppression through placing literature relative to social identity in conversation with one another. The current study understands identity within a complex matrix, which is informed by sociopolitical and historical forces (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990; Motsemme, 2002). However, literature within the domain of sex work does not often engage with the depth of these forces, such as the relationship between patriarchy, process of racialisation in South Africa and the sex trade industry. Therefore, the literature review engages with studies outside of the domain of sex work in order to develop a more comprehensive standing with the particularities of the experiences of prostituted women who are black. This engagement includes the oppression of the female body within patriarchal societies, as well as the subordination of black African women through processes of racialisation. The following section begins this process through exploring literature on the oppression of the female body within the sex trade industry and branches out to literature that provides a more comprehensive understanding of gender and race in South Africa. This is done in response to the limited scope of such literature in the domain of sex work. Thereafter, the Chapter concludes by presenting a review of South African studies in the domain of sex work.

Academic and more popular literature commonly conceptualises labour within the sex trade industry as a result of women's vulnerability within a matrix of subordination, as illustrated earlier within the Chapter (see: Scoular & O'Neill, 2007). It is important to note that such literature tends to generalise those who sell sex as cisgender women. As mentioned hitherto, some literature has highlighted that the power inequalities which exist within the sexual marketplace is not limited to gender inequality (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011; Vuolajärvi, 2018). As expressed by South African authors, it is the culmination of vulnerabilities that perpetuates the oppression of demographics of women (see: Gqola, 2015; Motsemme, 2002). Mathieson et al. (2016) offer the understanding that the matrix of social, political and economic inequality that women face contributes to their participation within the sexual marketplace as sellers of sexual services. These perspectives explicitly emphasise the subordination of women due to women's social vulnerability within a patriarchal society (Mathieson et al., 2016). They establish sex work as a violation of women's human rights, where women's bodies and relative consent to sexual relations is commodified through oppressive forces (Vuolajärvi, 2018).

Following the writing of feminist author Catharine Mackinnon (1994), women's participation within sex trade is perceived as forced. Mackinnon (1994) understands this manifestation of women's subordination as a form of torture, in which prostituted women are subjected to brutal treatment. The brutality that prostituted women face is often unrecognised within "[…] the legal design of civil rights" (Mackinnon, 1994, p. 13). Mackinnon (1994) lists that women within sex trade are negated of fundamental human and civil rights, such as security, liberty, privacy, freedom from arbitrary arrest, property ownership, the right to the recognition of being seen as a person before the law, the right to life and, finally, the right to equality.

The body of feminist authors who align with this view, understand capitalism as a product of (white) patriarchy, and sex work as an apparatus of such powers in which women's bodies are merely resources, commodified and exploited by men (Mathieson et al., 2016). The statement positions itself against the neoliberal, capitalist agenda. The authors argue that prostituted women's bodies, not their labour, is objectified. They become sexual objects that are purchasable and exchangeable within sex trade (Mathieson et al., 2016). This concurs with Marxist feminism, which has made some contribution to the classed experience of sex workers (see: Robinson, 2007). Marxist feminism notes that sex workers are often dehumanised by their labour, as they are said not to have agency[16] within their choice of profession. Sex workers are transformed into products, objectified by the nature of their work. The economic disempowerment within their status as the working or proletariat class forces them to abide to the needs of the ruling class (Robinson, 2007). Other authors have regarded sex work as the result of a low economic status; however an in-depth analysis of class has been limited (Dewey, 2012; Raguparan, 2017).

Authors such as Carter and Grobbe (1999) concur that in this process of objectification a simultaneous dehumanisation occurs, which consequences a separation of body and mind. Otherwise characterised as a process of disembodiment, Carter and Grobbe (1999) describe this as "[a] good prostitute [who becomes] devoid of a unique and personal identity. She is [an] empty space surrounded by flesh into which men deposit evidence of their masculinity. She does not exist so that he can" (p. 27). Arguably, the product of the history of oppression that women have endured, reinforces the patriarchal conditions that empowers male subjectivity (Mathieson

[16] "Agency refers to the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112), that is informed by personhood, desire, and intentionality (Ahearn, 2001).

et al., 2016). The commodification of women consequences feelings of estrangement, dissociation, and disembodiment as a result of being prostituted (Mathieson et al., 2016).

Evidently, this theoretical position aligns with the lineage of feminist literature which maintains that women's identities have been constructed in relation to their male counterparts (Gqola, 2015). Such literature argues that the existence of womanhood is continuously subordinated by the existence of manhood, as an inherent function within the social construction of the sex-dichotomy (Collins, 1990). The sex dichotomy reinforces the 'myth of women' through processes of objectification and dichotomising the body within a male-female dyad (See: Wittig, 1992). Wittig (1992) states that women's anatomy commonly determines their function in a heteropatriarchal society. That is, women are organised into the social order and provided with a role and social identity according to their biological features (Wittig, 1992). This concurs with Butler (1988), who argues that the heteronormative agenda is naturalised through the biologically determined rationale of the sex dichotomy (Butler, 1988). Butler's essay on the phenomenology of gender, establishes that the sex dichotomy exists as a power structure of biologised patriarchy (Butler, 1988). To this regard, the social meaning attached to the body is essentialised as natural and reinforces otherwise ambiguous differences between men and women (Butler, 1988). A reading of Wittig's (1992) argument can be complicated by the breadth of black feminist writing of the 1990's. This includes the intersectional work of Crenshaw (1989) and Hill-Collins (1990), who stated that different race and class formations inform different perceptions of the female body and their gender expression. Intersectional theory problematises the dichotomised conceptualisation of the male-female dyad. More recent research deepens this notion through introducing the multiple sex, sexuality and gender identities (See: Canham, 2017).

The subordination of black African women

Few studies have provided a statistical account of the demographics relative to the sex trade industry in South Africa. A study published in 2015 provided a working estimate of 137,641 female sex workers in South Africa (Konstant et al., 2015). However, the demographic details of these female sex workers were limited because the study did not include aspects such as race. In line with intersectionality, the current study understands that the particularities of black women's experiences are overlooked when their social identities are not explicitly conveyed (see: Crenshaw, 1989). To this regard, the following section introduces literature on the interconnected systems of power in which black African women are located. A review of such literature enables the study to explore the experiences of black African women who sell sex and how they are organised into an economy of power in South Africa.

Literature indicates that cultural norms conceptualises black African women as a homogenous group, who is primarily characterised in terms of the feminised body's capacity for heterosexuality and motherhood (Lake, 2014; Moreau, 2015). The studies referenced here explore social constructs relative to sexual violence towards black lesbian women; while this is not within the scope of the current study, authors such as Lake (2014) and Moreau (2015) provide meaningful insight to gender construction in South Africa. A study conducted in a rural area based in KwaZulu-Natal found that the abovementioned notions of gender are often reproduced to materialise male domination (Bhana, 2010). These meanings of gender manifest through material, cultural, symbolic and discursive forces. The study acknowledges that gender equality is formally legitimised by legislation; however, the law is often overlooked by customary practices that are mobilised around gender hierarchies that promote male domination (Bhana, 2010). These findings concur with South African writers, Helman and Ratele (2016),

who explore the construction of masculinity and femininity within the South African family system. The study found that the family is a space in which gender is both constructed and enacted (Helman & Ratele, 2016).

The authors argue that men have traditionally been positioned as dominant and exceptionally sexually driven, while women have been positioned as subordinate (Helman & Ratele, 2016). This concurs with literature presented earlier in the Chapter on sexuality by Foucault and Hurley (1990). Such construction of gender includes discourses of natural mothering, which inaccurately characterises and over-generalises all women, as having innate nurturing qualities. This positions women as caretakers, while exempting men from caring activities within the family because of their roles as providers and protectors (Helman & Ratele, 2016). Lues (2005) concurs, writing that women worldwide have been characterised as child-bearers, supporters, educators and contributors to the community, which has historically inhibited their economic participation. It is understood that women's predetermined role within society has revolved around their presence in the family and the home (Lues, 2005). In particular, Lues (2005) notes that black women's role within society has traditionally been conceptualised as a necessary part of their existence within society.

These findings are in line with Brown (2012) who found that African women's sexuality or gender identity is not perceived as a choice. Literature has indicated that black women have traditionally been positioned as wives and mothers, with their identities predominantly characterised through their reproductive functions (Brown, 2012). Similarly, Morrisey (2013) found that black South African women who do not conform to the heteropatriarchal characterisation of sexuality and gender are viewed as disrespectful to native cultural traditions (Morrisey, 2013). Such literature understands that black women are seen as supplements of

greater society (Lues, 2005). These constructions of gender are referred to as problematic constructions of gender by Helman and Ratele (2016). This problematic construction shapes gender inequality, practices of violence and leads to increased sexual risk. However, it is noted that the problematic construction of gender has been perpetuated by media representations and academic writing that situates it as a "poor black problem" (Helman & Ratele, 2016, p. 9).

Literature has indicated that black women's subjectivities are often neglected, marginalised and forgotten in South Africa (Motsemme, 2002). To this purpose, Motsemme (2002) argues that black women's identities are continuously fragmented in order to accommodate the political project of racism. Black women's voices and bodies are either ignored or glorified in order to legitimise the reproduction of institutionalised racist discourse (Motsemme, 2002). Gqola (2015) thickens this description through exploring the relationship between systems of race and sex. The author notes that the history of racialisation, through which humankind is organised into the social world, draws heavily upon the construction of sexual differences (See: Gqola, 2015). Gqola (2015) argues that institutionalisation of sexual violence rests on the bedrock of the relationship between race, sex and sexuality. The author argues that slavery, colonialism and race science catalogued bodies into meaning making systems through racial and sexual profiling. The author continues, noting that "race was made through rape in very direct, deliberate and indirect ways" (Gqola, 2015, p. 38). The statement engages with an intersectional complex of power, which highlights the bounded history of race and gender. Racialisation is a project of white capitalist, white supremist, heteropatriarchal societies that creates an inferiority complex within the non-white non-(masculine)-male (Gqola, 2015).

The history of black women's labour in South Africa

Literature acknowledges that women's entry into the sex trade industry is the result of economic disempowerment and social exclusion (Scoular & O'Neill, 2007). The current study is interested in the particularity of black prostituted women's experiences within the economic environment. It is understood from the literature that the history of systematic economic disempowerment has forced women, and more specifically black women, into precarious labour. Therefore, the following section explores the history of black women's participation within the economic environment in South Africa. In turn, this provides insight to the socioeconomic systems of oppression that black women have endured.

The history of black women's oppression within the labour force has been outlined in a literature review by Lues (2005). Lues (2005) notes that the apartheid regime has exacerbated the economic disempowerment of black women through racist policies. The apartheid government perceived black women's role in the development of the country as miniscule, which prohibited their access to labour, health and educational resources (Lues, 2005). Black women's subordination was institutionalised by legislative articles such as the Land Settlement Act, Act 12 of 1912 and the Group Areas Act, Act 36 of 1966 of South Africa. These laws prohibited black people from owning land, which forced black men to seek work opportunities away from home (Lues, 2005).

Black men were forced to search for work opportunities in more affluent areas due to a stringent tax system that was imposed onto rural areas, otherwise described as 'head tax' (Lues, 2005). These policies perpetually undermined rural livelihoods, as noted by Bhana (2010). This concurs with Mbembe (2003), who writes that the apartheid government controlled black people's movement between rural areas, townships and urban areas in order to meet the needs of

the white minority. These systems directly impacted the structure of black families in South Africa, due to men's migration for paid work (Bhana, 2010; Lues, 2005). Black men were separated and often alienated from their families (Lues, 2005). Black women were left to shoulder a myriad of responsibilities within the home that often included financial responsibilities (Bhana, 2010). However, these responsibilities were increasingly difficult as black women were forced into economic participation with limited access to the economic environment (Bhana, 2010). Such literature indicates, in not as many words, that the lives of black people were suppressed by racist policies through the way in which the apartheid government made meaning of the fleshy existence of black bodies.

The literature further acknowledges that black women's participation in the economic environment was inhibited through the discriminatory educational system of Bantu education (Bunting 2006; Lues, 2005; McKeever, 2017; Moore, 2015). Bantu education was fundamental within the development of a cheap, unskilled labour force consisting of the country's black majority population (Bunting, 2006; Moore, 2015). Schools characterised by Bantu education was under-resourced and overpopulated, presenting a curriculum with sub-standard educational programmes (Moore, 2015). Bantu education also perpetuated traditional, heteronormative gender roles and gender inequality through education that prepared girls for domestic roles such as wives and mothers (Lues, 2005).

The politics of migration in South Africa

The conditions which are outlined above are important to take note of when considering the politics of migration. Literature often outlines the intersection of migration, sex work and sex trafficking (see: Walker & Oliveira, 2015). Contemporary migration is often informed by the desire for improved livelihoods (Schular, 2016; Oliveira & Veary, 2015). It is noted, based on

South African studies, that female sex workers are often migrants (Oliveira & Veary, 2015; Schular, 2016; Walker & Oliveira, 2015). The disenfranchisement of migrants in South Africa has been reported by Mbiyozo (2018), who calls for a more comprehensive theoretical engagement of the intersection of gender and migration. The author notes that women have increasingly participated in migration, which has otherwise been conceptualised as a male phenomenon. Women's migration is often informed by the desire to care for their families' economic needs. This is significant in light of research which highlights that women selling sex are generally heads of households (Yingwana et al., 2019).

Migration poses various opportunities and risks to women (Mbiyozo, 2018). The report indicates that women experience opportunities for increased capabilities and freedoms however, the risks include violence, harmful practices, precarious labour, inability to access services, sexism, family separation and a burden to care for family with the income that is sourced (Mbiyozo, 2018). Literature that observes the intersection of sex work and migration, notes that migrants often engage with unconventional, criminalised methods to source income, which the current study conceptualises as precarious labour. Schular (2016) argues that sex workers experience disenfranchised citizenship through stigmatisation and exclusion from urban health and development planning as a result of their precarious labour.

Systems of racialisation in South Africa

Meer (1990) explores the conflated nature of patriarchy, class and race in the historical project of domination. Numerous international studies organise sex workers' experience within such an economy of power (see: Benoit et al., 2018; Moran & Farley, 2018); therefore, it is important for the literature review to explore studies that emphasise the historical project of domination within South Africa. Meer's (1990) work provides the current study with significant

insight into the interlocking of systems of privilege and oppression which may impact the experiences of prostituted women in South Africa. The study notes that patriarchy, class and race are social systems intended to manipulate human freedom and suppress the rights and privileges of subordinated groups within society. This provides an interesting vantage point, in relation to earlier literature that highlighted how neo-conservativism and moral politics[17] inform the criminalisation of sex work (see: Mathieson et al., 2016). The South African author argues that liberal democracies approach equality from a superficial perspective due to the implicit nature of power structures (Meer, 1990). Society utilises historically hierarchical systems of race, class and gender that are deemed as necessary for optimal functionality. The author utilises a Marxist perspective to develop her argument. It is understood that the deployment of resources is relative to a person's class and racial position in society. Here, the patriarchal system is a foundational structure upon which class and race is dictated (Meer, 1990).

Meer's (1990) work concurs with more recent literature by Modiri (2017) who argues that the power relationships of colonial-apartheid are inherent within South Africa's current constitution. He states that the constitution adopts a Western-liberal perspective that is composed of the symbolic order of white supremacy. The symbolic order of society consequences a material reality that informs the socio-economic, cultural, psychic and political environment (Modiri, 2017). Based on these studies, it is hypothesised that the symbolic order of society, as it is established through law and other socio-political institutions, may supress the life of black prostituted women. For these authors, the foundational structure of power differs slightly. However, both converge on the premise that society is symbolically ordered through the

[17] The term 'moral politics' is regarded as the conceptual framings of morality which are pertinent in political agendas (Nadesan, 2011).

intersections of the institutions of race, gender and class. These studies contextualise the work of Stevens et al. (2017), who argue that blackness is historically, spatially and temporally constructed. Moreover, it is noted that the construction of blackness exists in proximity to whiteness, through sociohistorical processes that have socially imposed forms of subjectivity onto black people (Stevens et al., 2017); therefore, informing the racialised positionality of black prostituted women, which forms part of the intersectional social identity that the current study seeks to examine. It is noted that South African studies do not often provide an in-depth account of these socio-political and historical perspectives that may inform the experiences of sex workers.

South African literature on sex work

A South African study conducted by Hubbard and Hunt (2015) applied a combination of Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to critically examine the representations of female sex workers in South African news outlets, *The Mail and Guardian* and *The Sowetan*. The study maintained a conclusion that is less linear, as to that by Bonthuys (2012) who will be discussed shortly. Hubbard and Hunt (2015) found a complexity of discourses within South African media representations of sex workers. For the most part, *The Mail and Guardian* displayed a decriminalisation stance, whereas *The Sowetan* seemed to hold conservative views of sex work as 'immoral' (Hubbard & Hunt, 2015). It seems that the representation of sex workers in South African research has tended toward discourses relevant in the representation of sex workers within the realm of morality politics established by gendered norms. Across both studies sex workers are represented as cisgendered women who are heterosexual (Bonthuys, 2012; Hubbard & Hunt, 2015).

Samudzi and Manell (2015) evidenced a similar gendered perspective regarding sex worker identities in a study conducted in Cape Town, South Africa. The authors examined the social identities imposed on cisgender male sex workers within the South African context. Their findings revealed that these sex workers are often perceived as having 'deviant' gender identities, which excludes them from various social services, such as healthcare. Moreover, the findings revealed that sex workers internalise socially imposed constructions of heteronormative masculinity and femininity, where they perceive themselves as having a sense of failed masculinity and femininity. All gendered roles are conceptualised through heteronormative terms. Heteronormative gender roles are perceived as morally just and therefore individuals who operate outside of these confines are considered deviant (Samudzi & Manell, 2015). Such gendered discomfort was noted to be exacerbated by the legal ramifications of sex work (Samudzi & Mannell, 2015). The identity categories that manifest within these studies appear to use a single axis to explore the identity of sex workers. As such, sex workers are often misrepresented through a distorted lens in research (See: Crenshaw, 1989). That is, their identities should be considered through intersecting identity categories that organises them into an economy of power. Otherwise, the interlocking systems of privilege and oppression are negated and the complexity of their experiences are reduced. Therefore, the current study acknowledges a gap within the literature as research can engage more comprehensively with the intersections of sex worker identities.

A study by Walker and Oliveira (2015) identifies that sex workers in South Africa are multiply burdened, as they experience oppression within the intersecting systems of gender, migration, violence and health care. This includes a conflation between sex work and sex trafficking, which contorts the experiences of those who sell sex into narratives of victimisation,

exploitation, and views sex workers as people who lack autonomy (Walker & Oliveira, 2015). The study indicates that sex workers who are migrants are especially exposed to higher risk of human rights violations (Walker & Oliveira, 2015). These findings concur with South African authors, who have evidenced that policies on sex work tends to be conflated with the discourse of human trafficking (Yingwana et al., 2019). Consequently, such conflation inappropriately identifies the experiences of sex workers. The context of criminalisation is particularly important, as it uniquely details the discourse of autonomy and danger within the sex trade industry. However, the study by Walker and Oliveira (2015) notes that issues of autonomy and exploitation are not unique to the sex trade industry. It is emphasised through moral discourse as a reason why sex work is an undesirable form of labour (Walker & Oliveira, 2015).

Policies tend to employ a primary concern for human trafficking, migration and the exploitation of children within the sexual marketplace (Yingwana et al., 2019). Prioritising these systems of oppression tends to negate the complex experiences and numerous vulnerabilities of sex workers. As such, the call for decriminalisation is undermined by the manner in which discourse on sex work is presented. Yingwana et al. (2019) argue that South African sex workers are exposed to multiple human rights violations because of the inaccurate social framing of their experiences. These violations include "long working hours, non-payment of wages, and violence perpetuated by clients, intimate partners, employers, and police" (Yingwana et al., 2019, p. 89). This aligns with literature which argues that the criminalisation of sex work results in institutionalisation of violence for migrant sex workers in Johannesburg (Schular, 2016). These institutional forms of violence are conceptualised as xenophobia, problems with accessing healthcare and other social services (Schular, 2016). Despite these risks, that are perpetuated by

the inappropriate characterisation of sex work, literature argues that sex work remains a feasible strategy to source income (Yingwana et al., 2019).

South African literature has reported on the disenfranchisement of black sex workers in South Africa, expressing that African cultures and religious ideologies often deem sex work as socially unacceptable or socially immoral (Yingawana, 2018). It should be noted that the study's conceptualisation of African culture is not meant as a deterministic statement that characterises all African cultures as homogenous (Yingawana, 2018). However, it is understood that African cultures share certain cultural ideologies and sociohistorical experiences (Yingawana, 2018). Yingawana (2018) reports that black sex workers often embody identities that counteract their marginalisation. These identities often intersect with and inform each other, they include being African, being a feminist and being a sex worker. These identities disrupt patriarchy and feminism through highlighting the nuances of their intersections (Yingawana, 2018).

Conclusion to review of literature

The literature review examined relevant topics regarding the legalisation, criminalisation and decriminalisation of sex work. Globally the criminal status of sex workers is constantly contested by feminist literature and social movement campaigns. In South Africa, platforms such as *SWEAT* and *Embrace Dignity* maintain a decriminalisation stance in an attempt to improve the rights of sex workers. However, as documented by Bonthuys (2012), this stance is often promoted in conservative moral framing to appeal to the South African public. The notion of morality politics has made great strides within literature on sex work. Morality appears to serve as a function of the legal and social world to police society. The theoretical orientation of biopolitics allows for an understanding of this. Importantly, the investigation of biopolitics also allows for an understanding of the manifestation of biopower within the various identity

categories. These include gender, race and class. South Africa's colonial and apartheid history seems to still manifest itself through the policing of bodies. This impacts identities of gender, race and class in various ways.

Research question

How do those who sell sex in post-apartheid South Africa textually represent their intersectional identity?

Chapter three: Methodology

The following chapter introduces the methodological approach of the current study. The study applies an approach developed within critical discourse studies in order to advance a comprehensive understanding of the textual representation of the identities of four prostituted women in post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter includes the research design, an overview of the analysable objects, the procedure to analysis, ethical considerations regarding the use of data in the public domain, as well as an overview of the trustworthiness of analysis and reflexivity.

Research design

The study engaged with the textual identity representation of four prostituted women through the application of the socio-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis. Identity was conceptualised through the use of biopolitics, as well as intersectionality. To this regard, the manner in which the material existence of prostituted women are politicised within the texts was investigated. A qualitative paradigm was adopted to serve this purpose, as the nature of the data was non-numerical (Creswell et al., 2006). The qualitative paradigm allowed the current study insight into the textual processes of meaning making and how they resonated with social structures (Creswell et al., 2006).

The epistemological orientation of the study was social constructionism. This resonated with the theoretical framework and approach to critical discourse studies. Social constructionism seeks to understand the interconnected nature of knowledge, power and its expression within the social world (Creswell et al., 2006). The use of social constructionism enabled an investigation between language and power within the objects of analysis (Parker, 2013). To this regard, the theoretical framework of biopolitics and intersectional feminism was deployed to understand how particular forms of power were expressed within the texts. For an in-depth account of the

theoretical framework, refer to Chapter two of this research report. The theoretical framing of the study was operationalised through a critical assessment of oppressive forces located in the texts and how they impact the identity of the subjects[18] (van Dijk, 2015). The study incorporated the knowledge bodies produced by the population through utilising the personal stories of prostituted women, as a means of collaborative practice.

Objects of analysis

The analysis tended to personal texts written by human subjects and published in the public domain of the internet. These texts will be referred to as objects of analysis or data. The term 'objects of analysis' refer to the structural, analysable elements within and outside of the texts. The current study understands an object of analysis as a collection of signs, or objects, that facilitate the expression of discourse (Adams St Pierrie, 2014). The current study employs the term 'subject' in reference to the speakers who are represented by the text. The term 'subject' denotes the speakers' psychological subjectivity.

Jowett (2015) views texts that are found online as a naturally occurring source of data, which is outside of the researcher's influence. The data comprised of four texts which communicate the personal experiences of sex workers who identify as women, otherwise referred to as prostituted women, from a low socioeconomic status. The texts do not explicitly communicate the race and sexual orientation of the respective prostituted women. However, it is covertly depicted that the prostituted women are black and straight in their sexual orientation. Demographic features such as age were not depicted.

[18] The term 'subject' is undertaken in response to the conceptualisation of emergent subjectivity. It is understood that subjectification precedes psychological subjectivity through processes of power (Hook, 2007). Therefore, subjectivity is constructed through knowledge imbued onto the natural world (Hook, 2007). The current study's conceptualisation of subjects refers to subjectivity as it relates to the bodies of knowledge embedded in language. The term 'subject' is used as it provides an apolitical account of those represented by the texts.

These texts were retrieved from *Embrace Dignity's* blog[19] (Tshelane, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). *Embrace Dignity* is a non-government organisation located in Cape Town, South Africa, that focuses on empowering local sex workers (Embrace Dignity, 2019a). The organisation presents a platform for prostituted women to tell their own stories through textual publications on their blog. These stories are personal accounts of the life of the respective prostituted woman, which includes numerous events that they may consider as significant with regard to their labour. The texts were published between August 2017 and March 2019. The following blog entries were retrieved and respectively named as Text 1, Text 2, Text 3, Text 4: "*Nokwanda's story: prostitution is violence against women*" (Text 1)[20]; "*Zenande story: prostitution is violence against women*" (Text 2)[21]; "*Poverty-stricken Nontando forced into prostitution*" (Text 3)[22]; "*Vera Qwesha's story: prostitution cannot be considered as work*" (Text 4)[23]. The current study refers to the texts as Text 1, Text 2, Text 3, Text 4. Three of the four texts were written in the first-person (Text 1; Text 2; Text 4). One of the four texts was written by a staff member of the organisation, where numerous quotations are used within the texts, referring to the respective prostituted women in the first person (Text 3). Literature has evidenced that prostituted women are often marginalised within society (Benoit et al., 2018; Comte, 2014). Therefore, it was reasoned that a personal account from members of this population would be valuable in understanding the textual representation of their biopolitical identity within the matrix of domination and subordination.

[19] http://embracedignity.org.za/our-blog/
[20] Text 1 was posted by Tshelane (2018a) on Embrace Dignity's blog, refer to reference list.
[21] Text 2 was posted by Tshelane (2018b) on Embrace Dignity's blog, refer to reference list.
[22] Text 3 was posted by Tshelane (2017) on Embrace Dignity's blog, refer to reference list.
[23] Text 4 was posted by Tshelane (2019) on Embrace Dignity's blog, refer to reference list.

The data was accessed through convenience sampling. Convenience sampling refers to a non-random method of sampling in which members of the target population who meet the set of criteria are selected (Etikan et al., 2016). The criteria included that the data was easily accessible within the public domain. Criteria also included that the data was sufficient in length. Literature indicates that there is no fixed minimum length for an object of analysis within critical discourse studies (Meyer & Wodak, 2009). I discussed the length of the texts with my supervisor, who agreed that the texts were of reasonable length. Furthermore, the criteria set out that the texts must reflect the personal experiences of people who sell sex within South Africa. The research question set out to analyse how identity constructs are communicated through these texts. Therefore, the personal nature of the texts allowed me to explore a population of women that literature regards as oppressed, through an analysis of their biopolitical identity within the matrix of subordination and domination. Moreover, a final criterion for the data was that it must be available on a South African social movement campaign's website. It was reasoned that data yielded from the online presence of a social movement campaign would support the personal experiences of prostituted women. The textual accounts seem to be representative of those who sell sex in the way they reflect their experiences. Therefore, the digital platform offered data that aligned with the aims of the research.

The data comprised of four textual accounts. For the purpose of CDA the data was of sufficient length (Meyer & Wodak, 2009). Fossey et al. (2002) write that sound qualitative research does not require a fixed minimum number of objects of analysis. The respective blog entries include (in the following order): a title, a photograph, the date of publication, the author of the post, hyperlinks to the category in which the blog entry was posted, the story, and hyperlink-tags to related topics. These texts are powerful accounts which maintain depth and

richness, that may otherwise not be as readily available through formal oral communication (Robinson, 2001). This is especially true considering the marginal status of the subjects (Benoit et al., 2018). All texts were published on the blog between August 2017 and March 2019. They were relatively recent at commencement of the current study and therefore appropriate for the study.

Procedure and analysis of data

After locating the four texts on *Embrace Dignity's* blog[24] (Tshelane, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019), they were saved through the 'save page' function available on Microsoft Edge. This allowed for offline accessibility to the text in its original format. Thus, preserving all analysable elements of the text such as titles, hyperlinks and images, as suggested by the likes of Pinheiro (2018). I also contacted the organisation via electronic mail, requesting permission to use the texts within the current study. Even though the texts are freely available in the public domain, I believed that it was ethically sound to contact the appropriate sources in order to obtain their consent (Appendix A). This is in light of literature which argues that it is the onus of the researcher to manage all potential harm and risk to the individuals and groups involved when conducting online research (Sugiura et al., 2016). My conversation with the Executive Director of the organisation revealed that researchers tend to organise knowledge around people within the sex trade industry. It is not the purpose of this study to subordinate the subjects within the study to academic discourse. The current study was opportunity to explore the personal accounts of an otherwise difficult to reach population, through 'naturally occurring' data within the public domain without posing risk to the population. To this regard, literature suggests that traditional ethical guidelines do not provide sufficient insight to the ethics of accessing research within the

[24] http://embracedignity.org.za/our-blog/

digital domain (Sugiura et al., 2016). These ethical components are further explored in the section titled ‘ethical considerations’ later in the Chapter. Upon addressing the concerns that were expressed by the organisation’s Executive Director, I was given the appropriate permissions to utilise the data from the organisation’s website. These concerns were around the use of terminology, such as ‘prostitute’ and ‘sex worker’. These terms have been defined in the glossary of relevant terms at the beginning of this research report. The study acknowledges that the Executive Director of the organisation expressed that the subjects do not identify as sex workers, rather they identify as ‘sex trade survivors’. However, the term ‘sex trade survivor’ did not appear within the texts and therefore it could not be used with reasonable justification. Terms such as ‘prostituted woman/women’ and ‘sex worker/s’ will be used as it relates to literature and the texts.

The study adopted van Dijk’s (2015) socio-cognitive approach (SCA) as the overarching analytical methodological framework. The analytic process was initiated by establishing an outline through which the SCA could be utilised while exploring the textual representation of identity through intersectionality and biopolitics. The SCA is considered a merger of critical discourse studies and social psychology, that observes social and cognitive processes within structures of discourse (van Dijk, 1988). The approach notes that the only adequate interface between society and discourse is cognition (van Dijk, 1988, 2009, 2015). More precisely, that textual structures and social structures are mediated by social cognition (van Dijk, 2015). Fundamentally, SCA argues that social cognition bridges an understanding of text, which may otherwise be arbitrary, to social structures. To this regard, language is understood as grouping of symbols that are made meaningful within the social domain.

The cognitive dimension, inherent within the text, was studied through several features of the text. This included the microstructures of language, the communicative situation and the semantic macrostructure (van Dijk, 2015, 2016). Together, these features of the objects of analysis produced a mental representation of the identity of the subjects. The microstructures of language refer to the structural aspects of the texts, which are considered within the study of linguistics (van Dijk, 2009). As it is not within my expertise to study the linguistic aspects of the texts, it was minimally analysed to ensure a trustworthy account of analysis. The semantic macrostructures of the text are regarded as those intentional global meanings, topics, and themes of the text, which are subjectively important to the speaker. However, as the texts were derived from the organisation's website, it was understood that these structures of the texts were impacted by the organisation's aims and goals. The semantic macrostructures were studied through an analysis of the titles, images and hyperlinks embedded within the text (van Dijk, 2009).

van Dijk (2009) argues that local meanings are often controlled by context models. Context models are conceptualised as those aspects of the objects of analysis that provide readers with resources to appropriately interpret the text. This means that the context model allows the reader to interpret the intentional meanings of the text. Context models are organised by a relatively simple schema consisting of fundamental categories, such as the spatial-temporal setting, participants and ongoing social action (van Dijk, 2015). In part, the context model was developed through the specific aims and norms of the organisation which contextually constrained the text. Therefore, the study includes a segment of the organisation's 'about us' page within the analysis to appropriately understand the context of the text. However, the broader temporal and spatial context was also included throughout the analysis and discussion. I

have made continual reference to the sociohistorical and legislative condition of South Africa relative to the objects of analysis in the discussion and findings Chapter. These aspects were understood as important to understanding the biopolitical and intersectional expression of identity. These aspects that move within and outside of the text, served as a precedent for the mutual knowledge within and outside of the organisation. The mental models which were communicated within the text were, therefore, constrained by the context models. This established a reading of that which is covertly and overtly communicated within the text. The context model, as depicted here, plays a crucial role in establishing the relationship between discourse and society (van Dijk, 2009). Thus, it is within the context model in which the operation of power within text becomes evident. The manner in which context models constrain the text is thus a reflection of the impact of power structures on the mental model. This invariably impacts the semantic model and more specifically the meanings inherent to the text.

The recognition of the communicative situation and the semantic macrostructure provided the parameters to commence the local semantic analysis. This served to explore the relationship amongst the texts and the language inherent within the texts (van Dijk, 2009). The language within the texts evoked a conceptual and ideological framework of the identities and embodied experiences of the subjects. This established a representation of the subjects' identities. Therefore, the ideological structures that relay the identities of prostituted women were analysed through exploring the set of ideas within and amongst the texts. The conceptual and ideological framework were explored through: (1) depictions of the subjects through their membership devices to the population of prostituted women, (2) the actions taken by the subjects, (3) the aims of the subjects, through their participation to the sex trade industry, (4) the

norms and values of the subjects, (5) the position of the subjects in society, and (6) the resources accessible to the subjects (van Dijk, 2015).

The analysis moved from within the text, to how each language set evokes an ideological framework which shapes social cognition, to how social cognition impacts the local and global societal structures conveyed through the text (van Dijk, 2015). In analysing the text in this way, I positioned the data in relation to past events, current experiences and future visions as it relates to the relative discourse (Meyer & Wodak, 2009). Meyer and Wodak (2009) reflect that identity politics must be understood within this temporal landscape. This allowed me to question how the discourses that are brought to light integrate to construct the identity of sex workers. The discourses reflect the historical conditions around gendered, racialised, classed and legal identities.

Ethical considerations

The research did not require ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand's Ethical Research Committee. This is because the data was published in the public domain, and thus readily available to anyone wishing to access it. However, there are some ethical controversies around the use of such data. Authors have raised concerns that texts posted publicly require consent from the involved parties prior to analysis, otherwise research may infringe on their privacy (Eysenbach & Till 2001; King 1996). Others have countered this argument through noting that text published in the public domain does not require ethical clearance to be analysed, because individuals who make text publicly available do so knowingly and therefore consent is assumed (Seale et al., 2010; Walther 2002). In order to navigate these ethical tensions, I contacted *Embrace Dignity* requesting permission for the use of the data

(Appendix A). Upon discussion, the Executive Director of the organisation permitted me to make use of the data.

I also recognise that those who sell sex are a vulnerable group, as their intersectional positionality lends itself to a marginalised social status (Benoit et al., 2018). The account of the marginality of those who sell sex were thoroughly explored within the literature review. The use of publicly available text as a method to gain insight on identity construction holds the least ethical concerns compared to, for example, interviewing those who sell sex face-to-face. I have maintained a heightened sensitivity in my writing about the represented identity of those who sell sex, to inhibit any form of possible further marginalisation. This sensitivity extended to moral privilege, as Ditmore et al. (2010) articulate that sex workers' marginality is often exacerbated through their positioning as 'immoral'.

Trustworthiness of analyses

Social constructionism lends itself to understanding the various dimensions that shape reality (Creswell et al., 2006). The theoretical framing of the current research draws on Foucauldian theory which seeks to understand the order of power in society (Campbell & Sitze, 2013; Mills, 2015; Quinan & Thiele, 2020). Immense research and planning was done to understand the biopolitical field of black prostituted women. I have incorporated a range of literature to ensure that the research is not a vehicle for colonial power. Thus, maintaining a mindfulness that the use of Foucault's work does not reflect colonial reformism. As such, the work of decolonial theorists such as Hook (2007), Modiri (2017) and Mbembe (2003) were highly valued within this study.

I have further maintained an intersectional feminist understanding of the research. Intersectional feminist scholars, such as Collins (1990) and Crenshaw (1989, 1991), who

understand that the matrix of subordination and domination is imperative in understanding identity, were turned to. Crenshaw (1989) recognises that upholding a singular approach to identity theorisation distorts the realities that individuals face. Therefore, examining the biopolitical field of sex work was a simultaneous reflection of the overlapping systems of domination and subordination which affect it (Weedon, 1987).

It has been argued that research within the paradigm of social constructivism is interpretive in nature (Morrow & Utah, 2005). Therefore, my subjectivity has impacted my approach to the current study. It should be noted that a reading of the findings and discussion would be incomplete without the context of reflexivity. This begs the question: if the current study is interpretative in nature, how have I ensured the trustworthiness of analysis? Morrow and Utah (2005) outline several criteria for trustworthiness in social constructivist research, which includes fairness, dependability, triangulation, researcher reflexivity, a deep understanding of the data and particularity, to name a few.

The criterion of fairness is conceptualised through upholding and honouring different constructions of meaning, as it is relevant to the literature and the data (Morrow & Utah, 2005). I was particularly concerned with presenting a fair account of the data, which translated into an extensive account of the theoretical framework and literature. This was a priority throughout the research process, as the theoretical framework and literature informed my interpretations of the texts. The criterion of fairness concurs with that of triangulation. Triangulation is defined as respecting diverse perspectives (Morrow & Utah, 2005). I believe that my respect for the multiple perspectives that have been derived from the literature and the data is exemplified by the sensitivity that I maintained within the characterisation of the subjects. Dependability of the research was ensured through systematically engaging with the research process and admittedly

omitting the linguistic aspects of the analysis that are not within my expertise, as I have mentioned earlier. Furthermore, dependability was ensured through engaging within the supervision process and appropriately incorporating the guidance of my supervisor. The particularity of the data is conceptualised as an appreciation of the integrity of unique cases (Morrow & Utah, 2005), which have been thoroughly presented within the findings and discussion Chapter.

Reflexivity

Billig (2008) writes that researchers must exhibit a continual critical awareness when analysing discourse. A critical awareness should not be contained within the text itself but expanded to incorporate the researcher and their intersectionality (Billig, 2008). Keeping this in mind, I have continually negotiated my own intersectionality in relation to the current study, as indicated in this section. I have reflected on my positioning within the matrix of domination and subordination through the research process and how it informs my understanding of the current study. My intersectionality is defined as a white body within an interracial family, assigned male at birth, who identifies as non-binary and queer, and raised in the middle-class. This characterisation is not merely a narcissistic recognition; instead, it serves as a starting point to understand how intersectionality consequences a perception of the research.

Engaging with this intersectionality and the relative subjectivity that I have developed was specifically necessary for the current study, considering the Foucauldian conceptualisation that knowledge is power (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). In the dialectical understanding that knowledge is power, knowledge refers to the construction of realities, through language (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). This perspective conceptualises that psychological subjectivity is produced through processes of subjectification (Hook, 2007). To this regard, I was positioned to

continuously question how my experience of privilege and oppression may influence the current research.

As a subject of processes of power, my intersectional positioning has shaped the way I perceive reality. In turn, I did not want to develop a narcissistic account of my perception of reality, as suggested by Pillow (2003). Literature argues that reflexivity in qualitative research may often parallel a self-absorbent endeavour (Pillow, 2003). In light of my intersectional positioning, I have questioned how my role as a reproductive agent of knowledge may reinforce oppressive power dynamics. I remained cautious throughout the research process to ensure that I do not succumb to dominant forms of knowledge that may reinforce the subordination of prostituted women.

I believe that it is important for me to acknowledge how my sex, sexuality and gender, and racial identity have informed a particular interaction with the texts. I have long been interested in questions of gender, sex and sexuality within heteropatriarchal societies. This is a curiosity that extends to continuously questioning the naturalising function implicit in heteronormativity. During my reading of the texts, I was immediately drawn to the manner in which heteronormativity was naturalised within the texts and questioned by which processes this was enabled. Initially, I was drawn to problematise the naturalisation of heteronormativity within the context model of the texts. However, I came to recognise that this was projection of the oppression that I have experienced and not necessarily a burden experienced by the subjects. I engaged with the context model with much caution, while maintaining this insight.

Concurrently, being assigned male at birth means that I was socialised into knowledges and behaviours that uphold masculinity's productive function within capitalism (Repo, 2013). As I have indicated in the literature review of this thesis, feminised bodies (those biologically

determined as female) have been distinguished within subjugated positions relative to masculinised bodies (those biologically determined as male). It was not within the intention of the current study to reproduce the oppressive forces of patriarchy. In so saying, I was positioned in a continuous dialogue with the knowledges relative to masculinity and more specifically, white masculinity.

I acknowledge that my racial experience is one of privilege. Throughout the research process, I have developed a greater awareness of the privilege that vests within my white body. The theories that were used within the theoretical framework extended to understanding how my privilege has positioned me in relation to the world. This was especially important, as the ideological circumference of whiteness has often functioned to subjugate blackness. As literature indicates, whiteness is often parallel to a physical and social existence that only sees itself (Fanon, 1986). The current study has been a process of developing insight through continuous reading and reflection in order to expand the parameters of my interpretation with the intention of social justice. Engaging with the work of African authors such as Fanon (1986), Mbembe (2003), Modiri (2017), and Stevens et al. (2017), I was able to develop and better contextualise my perspectives. I have become more aware of how easily my whiteness can lean towards an ignorance when unexamined. I developed a critical awareness of my racial identity through positioning myself in relation to decolonial studies and the current study. I critically reflected on my own biopolitical positioning, through examining my racial privilege and how it may alter my interpretations of the data.

Negotiating race within the current study was challenging in consideration of the colonial history of South Africa. I often wonder what the role of a white researcher is when engaging with black identities. I understand that a recognition of my intersectionality does not absolve me from

the politics of representation (Pillow, 2003). It is not my intention to subjugate blackness to white thought. Such a position would lead me to believe the fallacy of an 'expert role', ultimately neglecting the nuanced knowledge embedded within the texts. The criteria for trustworthy qualitative research was important in this regard (Morrow & Utah, 2005). Through criteria such as fairness, dependability and triangulation, as described hitherto, I believe that I was able to develop an account which honours the data and respectfully engages with black subjectivity.

I would be flawed to disregard the difficulty I have had to develop my understanding of the complexity of identity within the decolonial context. I have continually questioned how to engage with Western theories, such as Foucault's work, within the post-colonial context. The current study did not seek to give an identity to those who sell sex. Labelling those who sell sex would be a process of subjugating those to academic discourse. My understanding of the prostituted women's identities was retrieved from within the texts, in order to be respectful of the data and the experiences of those represented by the data. My investigation placed academic discourse in conversation with the texts, to understand how bodies become a source of political discourse; and more importantly how those who sell sex have textually expressed their own existence within this economy of power. This relates to literature which notes that research within the social constructivist paradigm should place different knowledges in conversation with one another, in order to develop an enhanced understanding (Morrow & Utah, 2005).

I found myself within the predicament of wanting to understand the complexity of a particular identity within the South African social landscape. However, literature does not provide a thorough understanding of the ways in which colonialism has disrupted South African identities, and more particularly, the identity of black, South African women who work or have worked within the sex trade industry from the theoretical perspectives presented in the current

study. These difficulties are echoed by the forms of identification within the sex trade industry. Numerous forms of self-identification was presented in the literature, such as ‘sex worker’ or ‘prostitute’ (Musto et al., 2015). It was also noted in my communication with the organisation who published the texts online that the women who are represented by the texts identify as sex trade survivors (Appendix A). During this communication I informed the organisation that I am not committed to the use of specific terminology which would be ill-fitting of the subjects. To navigate the challenges with terminology, I utilised the term ‘sex worker’ when describing the literature. However, the term ‘prostituted women’ was used when relating to the objects of analysis.

Chapter four: Findings and discussion

Introduction

The following Chapter presents the findings and discussion of the current study. The Chapter is pragmatically organised according to the socio-cognitive model, as illustrated in Chapter three. The analysis begins with exploring the communicative situation, as it conveys the resources that enables the reader to establish a context of the text (van Dijk, 2009). The context of the texts is, firstly, elucidated through an investigation of the source of the data. Due to the secondary nature of the data, such investigation is considered necessary for an appropriate analysis of the text. Secondly, the resources surrounding the text are analysed. These shape the reader's interpretation of the text, as it assists the reader to interpret the text according to the social environment (van Dijk, 2009). Thereafter, the network of ideas that are covertly and overtly communicated within the texts are discussed, which develops a social representation of black prostituted women in South Africa.

The data was retrieved from an online source, *Embrace Dignity* (2019b), to elicit the discourses that are employed to construct the intersectional, textually represented identities of prostituted women. It is important to take note that the term 'prostituted women' is a form of self-identification, noted within the data, and therefore it will be used to refer to women who sell sex. The texts represent the lived experiences of women in the sex trade industry. It is not the intention of the following Chapter to establish a generalisable identity of women within sex trade. The current study acknowledges that identity is complex. This means that the textually represented identities of the prostituted women cannot be contained by the objects of analysis. The Chapter is merely an indication of the textually represented identities of the prostituted women within the confines of the texts. The study conceptualises identity within the framework of biopolitics and

intersectionality. This is an investigation of the manner in which the body is organised within interlocking systems of power.

The current study understands that power structures are institutionalised through the normalisation of dominant rationalities, which provides a central axis through which the individual and the group relate to each other (Mills, 2015). Normalisation is irreducible from social institutions and the force of the law (Mills, 2015). Law maintains access to the body through its continuous regulatory function (Mills, 2015). The Chapter is positioned within the greater social environment of South Africa, which criminalises the buying and selling of sexual services. The social institutions of gender, sex, sexuality, race and class are explored as they relate to the textual identities analysed within the Chapter. It is understood that the greater social environment relates to the construction of the prostituted women's textually represented identities, as will be explored within the discussion.

The context model

The following section introduces the various components that inform the reader's interpretation of the text. This is otherwise referred to as the context model (van Dijk, 2009). The context model regards those aspects of the text which provide the reader with appropriate resources to interpret the intended meaning of the text. These resources are presented on the communicative situation and include the temporal context (van Dijk, 2009). The texts were found on the internet. They were located on *Embrace Dignity's* website as blog entries, posted between 2017 and 2019.

The name of the organisation establishes a contextual framework that informs the reader how the organisation situates itself in relation to those who sell sex (van Dijk, 2009). The name of the organisation, *Embrace Dignity*, evokes the act of willingly and enthusiastically accepting the qualities of honour and respect. *Collins Dictionary* (2021a, 2021b) illustrates several definitions

for the terms ‘embrace’ and ‘dignity’. The use of the word ‘embrace’ is defined by an eagerness and willing reception; it can also assume the capacity to avail oneself (*Collins Dictionary*, 2021a). ‘Dignity’ is defined as the display of self-respect, the elevation of character and the embodiment of worthiness (*Collins Dictionary*, 2021b). In conjunction, the phrase ‘embrace dignity’ suggests a positive reception of that which the organisation considers as dignified. The organisation elaborates on their intentions, by asserting the following on their ‘about us’ page:

> *Embrace Dignity is a South African, feminist, abolitionist and human rights advocacy NGO […]. We set out to challenge gendered power inequalities that continue to oppress women and girls through prostitution, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. This is done by strengthening support systems for women and girls who want to leave prostitution, examining men’s demand for prostitution and by creating a social consciousness about the economic and social conditions of these women and girls through law reform and community advocacy programmes (Embrace Dignity, 2019a).*

In this regard, the reader is guided through these resources to understand that the term ‘embrace dignity’ refers to embracing an ideological framework that counters the oppression of South African women and girls who would like to exit the sex trade industry. This analysis of the context model is developed in accordance to aims and norms of the organisation, as it reflects the ongoing social action of the organisation (van Dijk, 2015).

Based on the abovementioned description, the organisation counters oppression from an abolitionist feminist perspective. This indicates that the organisation orientates itself within the discourse of abolitionist feminism; as such, organising the context model within an economy of knowledge that relates to abolitionist feminist discourses. Some literature indicates that abolitionist feminism conceptualises prostitution as inherently exploitative towards women

(Dewey, 2012; Kesler, 2002; Satz, 2010), which is coherent with the text derived from the website. Abolitionist feminism argues that women are forced into prostitution through economic conditions, which favour men (Dewey, 2012; Kesler, 2002; Satz, 2010). This creates a shared disposition of sex work as feminised labour (Bonthuys, 2012). It seems that the text presented on the 'about us' page engages with the oppression of 'women' and 'girls' as determined by their sexed (feminised) bodies. Therefore, the 'about us' page conveys that the force of the death function is practiced onto the material existence of 'women' and 'girls', which situates them in precarious living conditions (see: Repo, 2013). Based on the theoretical orientation of the current study, it is understood that discourses of exclusion and oppression is advanced when a group does not meet the conditions of bourgeois political agenda (Quinan & Thiele, 2020; Repo, 2013). However, these resources are not sufficient to detail how feminised bodies are organised into an economy of power. It is reasonably argued that the 'about us' page primarily communicates that the politicisation of the material existence of the feminised body develops a consequential space for economic disempowerment and sexual exploitation within a patriarchal society, which fosters women's entry into sex trade (Mathieson et al., 2016; Moran & Farley, 2018)

Some literature within the domain of sex work critiques abolitionist feminism for its tendency to organise its understanding of prostituted women's unfavourable economic position within the binary of the sex dichotomy (Cavalieri, 2011). It is argued that the text found on the 'about us' page describes the oppression that 'women' and 'girls' endure, as a result of the way in which feminised bodies are organised in society with respect to the sex dichotomy. It seems that the articulation of womanhood on the 'about us' page covertly communicates that womanhood is an indicator of embodied experience. This simultaneously characterises

prostituted women within a heteropatriarchal conceptualisation of gender[25]. These findings have been interpreted through the seminal work of Butler (1988) who argues that sex and sexuality often take on naturalistic explanations within heteropatriarchy, which assumes that "[…] women's social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology […]" (p. 520). Literature argues that the use of discrete gender categories maintains a humanising function (Butler, 1988). In so doing, prostituted women are humanised within the death function through their assumed cisgender identity and heterosexuality. Furthermore, the characterisation of buyers as men, keeping in mind the context model, position men as dominant and exceptionally sexually driven (Carter & Grobbe, 1999). This conceptualisation of gender has been witnessed by Helman and Ratele (2016), who studied the gendered construction of masculinity and femininity within South African families.

This is an implicit integration of the sex dichotomy through the binary characterisation within the context model, which elicits a hegemonic process that refers to a biologically deterministic view of sex and gender as it has developed in relation to heteropatriarchal whiteness (Gqola, 2015). Literature has evidenced that heteropatriarchal whiteness has constructed the binary ordering of masculine and feminine bodies within the sex dichotomy (Gqola, 2015). This political project celebrates those categorised as masculine, while debasing those categorised as feminine (Gqola, 2015). It should be noted that this does not mean that the 'about us' page celebrates the masculine, while debasing the feminine. Rather, the text utilises terminology born from the doctrine of the sex dichotomy which inadvertently naturalises the heteronormative agenda (Butler, 1988; Wittig, 1992). This is because the sex dichotomy exists as

[25] Gender identity is regarded as a sense of self, which exists on a spectrum (Cava, 2016). Literature confirms that "sex at birth is not a stable ground from which one can measure the distance to gender identity" (Cava, 2016, p. 2). However, heteronormative customs tend to categorise gender identity within the binary of the sex dichotomy, as either male or female (Butler, 1988).

a power structure of biologised patriarchy (Butler, 1988). It reveals the ways in which human life is subjected to political expressions of power. That is, the manner in which the biological features of the human body are organised into a political existence (Mills, 2015). The sex dichotomy maintains a sociohistorical function of falsely predetermining the male body as biologically superior to the female body. In this regard, the oppression that 'women' and 'girls' endure, as referred to in the communicative situation, is derived from a false social assumption that feminised bodies are biologically inferior within the man-woman sexual dyad (Butler, 1988). To this regard, literature has shown that women's economic disempowerment is a symptom of oppressive patriarchal systems which prioritise the quality of life of men in a given society (Dewey, 2012; Kesler, 2002; Satz, 2010).

It seems that the characterisation of 'women' and 'girls' broadly refers to the population of women and girls from a singular axis of oppression. In light of Crenshaw (1989), the experiences of a group who is characterised through the gaze of a singular axis of oppression is perceived as homogenous with the most privileged within the group. Literature argues that the experiences of white women are often privileged within discourse of womanhood, which marginalises the experiences of black women (Crenshaw, 1989). To this regard, it is argued that the context through which the text is interpreted is inhibited by both race (whiteness), and the sex dichotomy (heteronormative gender constructions). Therefore, this process of categorising 'women' and 'girls' as sellers of sex eradicates within-group differences on the premise of race, gender identity and class, and rather promotes heteronormativity. In this manner, it further marginalises minority sex, sexuality and gender groups within the sex trade industry as the prostituted women represented by the organisation is assumed white and cisgendered within this characterisation. This characterisation maintains the biopolitical quality of supressing those who

do not conform to it within the death function, as described within the theoretical framework (Repo, 2013).

The mental representation that the audience develop of prostituted people as feminised bodies is further detailed by images utilised on the website and blog entries. All four texts utilise a banner of a group of six black women sitting together, as seen in Figure 1 below. Two women on the banner who are most visible are seen wearing makeup that is stereotypically characteristic of cisgender women. This follows research which indicates that feminine norms, such as norms of beauty and romance exists among cisgender women (Siegel & Calogero, 2019). Furthermore, two of the four texts utilise images of women wearing clothing that are stereotypically female, such as lingerie, high heeled shoes and beaded jewellery (Text 1 & Text 4). The use of images which are stereotypical of traditional gender categories evokes a discourse of the feminisation of the female body. This reinforces the discourse of the naturalisation of the heteronormative, and respective cisgender condition, within the sex dichotomy (Butler, 1988; Wittig, 1992). The depiction of black women in Figure 1 and 3, as well as a white woman in Figure 2, enforces a general ambiguity of sex worker's racial identity. The manner in which the texts communicate race will be elaborated on later in the Chapter.



Figure 1 (Embrace Dignity, undated)



Figure 2 (Embrace Dignity, 2018)



Figure 3 (Embrace Dignity, 2019c)

The context model develops a social representation of sex workers as inherently feminine. Thus, through the communicative situation, the audience is introduced to a discourse that encourages the identification of sex workers as racially ambiguous women and girls (See: van Dijk, 2009). The characterisation is not limited to the website's 'about us' page but includes the blog entries, where reference is made to "*women*" (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4) and "*prostituted women*" (Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). The use of such a singular perspective on the oppression of 'women' and 'girls' disregards the body of research that promotes the intersectional matrix of identity within social justice discourse (Collins, 1990, 2019; Crenshaw, 1989). These observations are further noted within the texts through the continous reference to the man-woman sexual dyad (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). For example, Text 4 expresses that

"*[p]rostitution undermines women's rights to gender equality and dignity by commodifying the sex act and treating women as objects to be bought, sold and abused*". The text identifies these oppressive conditions within the social system of patriarchy (Text 4).

Semantic macrostructures

The semantic macrostructure (van Dijk, 2009), as described in Chapter three, refers to the intentional global meanings that are derived from the titles, topics, and themes within the objects of analysis. This section presents the semantic macrostructures within the text, which further details the context model. These titles, topics, and themes establish the parameters for the audience's interpretation of the text.

All texts refer to the prostituted women by name or pseudonym within the title. The subjects' names are female, which is in line with observations made hitherto. The use of proper nouns in the titles communicates ownership of the texts by the respective prostituted women, who I will refer to as subjects. Furthermore, the subjects are predominantly identified by 'black African' names. These names include "*Nokwando*" (Text 1), "*Zenande*" (Text 2), "*Nontando*" (Text 3) and "*Vera Qwesha*" (Text 4). The names and pseudonyms that appear in the titles immediately evoke a mental representation of the subjects' race as black; however, their racial identity is not directly disclosed within the text. The audience develops a mental representation of the subjects as blackened woman. The term 'blackened' is adopted from Jackson (2020), who describes the process of racialising, or blackening, the material existence of the body. However, this characterisation of the subjects' racial identity is not explicitly detailed within the texts, it is merely implied. I will elaborate on the nondisclosure of their black subjectivity later in this Chapter as it relates to the texts.

Text 1 and Text 2 refer to prostitution as an act of violence against women within their titles. The title of Text 1 is "*Nokwando's story: Prostitution is violence against women*", as well as the title of Text 2 is "*Zenande Story: Prostitution is violence against women*". These titles suggest that the subjects have been violated by the institution of prostitution. The simultaneous generalisation of prostitution as violence against women and personalisation of the specific text, creates a conceptual space for the reader to deduce that the sociopolitical conditions of womanhood has made the subjects susceptible to the violations of prostitution. It reminds the audience of the abolitionist model that has been discussed earlier within the Chapter, which evokes that the vulnerability of women and girls are related to their feminised bodies (Comte, 2013). This is made meaningful through biopolitical literature, which would argue that the position of feminised bodies in society is undermined by the death function to ensure the hierarchical position of masculinised bodies within the parameters of patriarchy (Butler, 1988; Repo, 2013). It seems that these titles attempt to evoke that the speaker's stories are representative of all women through the use of the common noun 'women' in the plural form. The assertions made within the title that "*prostitution is violence against women*" (Text 1; Text 2) positions the text in a conversation with the discourse of gender-based violence. This is reinforced by the hyperlink (van Dijk, 2009) that "*prostitution is violence*" (Text 1; Text 2).

The analysis observes a concurrent discourse of gender-based violence and women's vulnerability through the semantic macrostructures of the texts. The biopolitical implication of the use of these discourses is observed through the way that the prostituted woman is subjugated to processes of violence, which reinforces her subordinate position in society. This position broadly refers to the heteronormative man-woman dyad within the sex dichotomy, as highlighted by authors such as Butler (1988). It illustrates how the prostituted woman is stratified in society.

Within this position, the text conveys that the prostituted woman is vulnerable to violations. However, through the generalisations made within the texts, it seems that the text seeks to communicate that the prostituted woman's position within society is representative of all women. Therefore, the conditions that prostituted women are vulnerable too, are generalised to the population of women. These violations are constructed to be a consequence of patriarchy's conceptualisation of womanhood. It engages the reader with discourses such as those described by Comte (2013) who writes that some literature conceptualises prostitution as a form of rape through the objectification and dehumanisation of women.

The current study concurs with Bonthuys (2012), who argues that South African media encourages interpretations of sex workers through deploying a discourse of moral panic. Thus, the texts develop a public concern for women and girls, who may be exploited by the sex trade industry. The public concern develops, as emphasised by Bonthuys (2012), as a result of the threat that such violence poses to the moral standards of society. These findings correlate with local and international studies that have investigated the moral politics of sex work (Bettio et al., 2017; Bonthuys, 2012; Raguparan, 2017).

The generalisation of womanhood by the texts set up a reading of the text that reflects the sociopolitical conditions relative to cisgender women (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). This interpretation is further deduced from images published on the website, such as Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3, and reference to (heteronormative) gender and sexuality within the text. For example, in Text 3 where the subject refers to romantic relationships with men, asserting "*It's better not to tell your boyfriend you're in sex trade*" (Text 3). This is significant as it is informant of the shared cognitive interface (van Dijk, 2009) between the participants of the texts (speaker, the organisation, and readers). Van Dijk (2009) expresses that a fundamental property of discourse is

its incompleteness. The mental representations that are embedded in the texts, which contribute to the cognitive interface, is examined within the implicit propositions of the text. These propositions are not explicitly said, they are not contained within the semantic structures of the text, but they are covertly conveyed through elements within the text (van Dijk, 2009).

The title of Text 3 asserts "*Poverty-stricken Nontando forced into prostitution*". The subject's disempowered position becomes immediately apparent to the reader, based on the explicit communication within the title. The manner in which 'poverty' is positioned within the title fashions an understanding of the subject as disempowered due to her reported lack of ability, influence, or power. This is observed through the use of the verb "*stricken*", which suggests that the subject did not choose a life of poverty, but it was imposed onto her. It immediately invites the reader to conceptualise poverty as a social institution that exists within a temporal space, which maintains a continuity within South Africa. Moreover, poverty is conceptualised in relation to the identity of the subject. In shaping the understanding that the subject's participation in the sex-trade industry was not by choice, the title creates the assumption that the undesirable condition of 'poverty' is causally related to prostitution. That is, poverty creates the condition in which the subject was coerced into prostitution. This is strengthened through the use of the adjective "*forced*". These findings are concurrent with authors who have observed that poverty often facilitates entry into the sex trade industry (Moran & Farley, 2019). Entry of this nature is conceptualised as "*a choice that is not a choice*" (Moran & Farley, 2019, p. 2).

The title of Text 4 asserts "*Vera Qwesha's story: prostitution cannot be considered as work*" (Text 4). The title infers the assumption that prostitution is otherwise assumed as a form of labour. It seems that the title attempts to evoke that the subject's story represents a counter conceptualisation of the neoliberal understanding of sex work as labour (see: Mathieson et al.,

2016). In using the phrase "*cannot be*" the title informs the reader that they must not conceptualise prostitution as work. Through asserting the proposition in the present tense, the proposition attempts to create a shift within the conceptualisation of prostitution. It seems that the proposition operates to create a counterargument, which is weaved into the story of the subject. In this way, the title evokes that the speaker's story is a discourse of prostitution as non-labour. It is inferred that the subject's identity is that of a black woman, through the use of image on the blog entry and her name. This develops a mental model between the identities of black women and the understanding of prostitution as non-labour.

The position developed within the title of Text 4 creates a counter discourse to the sex work position. The sex work position argues that women have the capacity to act with autonomy (Mathieson et al., 2016). It argues that women have the right to act with liberty and advocates, in accordance with neoliberalism, that women's participation in the sex trade industry is within their agential capacity (Mathieson et al., 2016). Therefore, the sex work position argues any conduct within the sex trade industry should be considered as labour and provided with the appropriate labour rights (Mathieson et al., 2016). Through emphasising sex work as non-labour, the audience develops a mental representation of sex work that aligns with sex trafficking discourse (Cho et al., 2013; Ditmore, 2008; Gould, 2011). Literature regarding sex trafficking argues that prostituted women are disempowered and exploited as sexual objects (Moran & Farley, 2019). Literature that aligns with this position argues that:

> *poverty, racist lack of opportunity/education, targeting of marginalised women of [colour], those with disabilities, or those who have experienced prior sexual abuse and emotional and physical neglect – all of these factors channel women into prostitution, which is the business of sexual exploitation. Prostitution exists because of the male*

demand for it, and racial and economic inequalities render women vulnerable to it (Moran & Farley, 2019, p. 1).

However, some authors critique the sex trafficking position, as they argue that such a perspective tends to characterise prostituted women as victims (Benoit et al., 2018). Furthermore, such literature suggests that the sex trafficking position inaccurately positions prostitution as a modernised form of slavery (Benoit et al., 2018). The title of Text 4 develops a conceptualisation of prostitution that resonates with sex trafficking.

Hyperlinks within the data objects

The semantic macrostructure is further observed through the hyperlinks within the text. These hyperlinks refer to the location in which the blog entries were posted and the themes relevant to the blog entries. These hyperlinks covertly guide the reader's interpretation of the texts, as they function to categorise the texts alongside other texts. They are therefore used to introduce the reader to a knowledge economy relative to the discourse. This has particular cognitive implications, as it develops a cognitive interface within the texts that shape the way the audience understands the text. This is in concurrence with van Dijk (2009) who argues that people understand reality from a constructivist perspective. The hyperlinks are associated with the mental constructs that relate to the knowledge that the audience have about the world (van Dijk, 2009).

The following hyperlinks are commonly used amongst the four data objects: "*activism*", "*change*", "*life*", "*end prostitution*", "*no free choice means no freedom*", "*prostitution is oppression*", "*prostitution is violence*", "*equality*", "*law Nordic*", "*law sex trafficking*", "*embrace dignity*", "*law*" (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). These hyperlinks inform the reader

that the blog entries are an intentional act of activism that serve to propel change within the lives of women. They create the inferential assumption that all women are vulnerable to the oppression and violence of sex work, as noted previously within the Chapter. Prostitution is further conceptualised as oppressive and violent towards women. This infers that any act of sex trade is violation against the human dignity of women. It further establishes that entry into the sex trade industry is not by choice, it is forced labour and therefore prostitution is sex trafficking. These findings align with the work of Moran and Farley (2019) who argue that prostitution is an oppressive system concealed by the ideologies of a neoliberal monetary arrangement, where one person's economic needs are coerced by another's sexual desire (Moran & Farley, 2019). These economic demands coerce entry into the sex trade industry (Moran & Farley, 2019).

South African authors have evidenced that notions of sex work and sex trafficking is often conflated (Yingwana et al., 2019). Such a conflation tends to negate the complex experiences and vulnerabilities that lead people into the sex trade industry (Yingwana et al., 2019). This does not deny that sex trafficking is a social problem in South Africa but rather seeks to express that sex trafficking should be appropriately conceptualised in consideration of sex work (Yingwana et al., 2019). As Yingwana et al. (2019) indicate, the conflation of sex work and sex trafficking tends to ignore common human rights violations, such as "long working hours, non-payment of wages, and violence perpetuated by clients, intimate partners, employers, and police" (p 89). These challenges are addressed as marginal citizenship later in the Chapter. It should be noted that the overlap between sex work and sex trafficking discourse exists as a result of the conditions that foster entry into prostitution (Moran & Farley, 2019).

The hyperlink also refers to law, implying that the South African legal framework is not sufficient in regard to sex trade. This refers to South Africa's Criminal Law (Sexual Offences

and Related Matters) Act 32 of 2007, which criminalises the buying and selling of sexual services. Literature acknowledges that the criminalisation of sex work is premised within the Judeo-Christian and abolitionist ideological framework (Comte, 2014). Criminalisation of sex work often serves within neoconservative societies to restrict individual freedom, in order to maintain the collective social values and morality (Mathieson et al., 2016). Legal articles are imposed on the various parties involved in the buying and selling of sexual services (Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). The blog entries refer to the Nordic model of sex work through the hyperlinks when expressing "*law Nordic*". Accompanied by the description extracted from the 'about us' page, it is evident that the website proposes the Nordic model of sex work as a preferential legal system.

As indicated in the literature review, the Nordic model is a legal system that attempts to reduce prostituted women's vulnerability through criminalising the buying of sexual services, while legalising the selling thereof (Vuolajärvi, 2018). The model characterises sex work as a manifestation of the unequal distribution of power between men and women within a heteropatriarchal society (Vuolajärvi, 2018). This aligns with discourse that has been communicated hitherto and that will still be discussed. The model seeks to address the oppression of prostituted women through addressing the patriarchal forces that support the sex trade industry (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). In so doing, an ideological shift occurs that penalises the buyers of sexual services, who are generally men (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). This is an ideological attempt to reduce the stigmatisation of women's sexuality, while reprimanding patriarchal forces that exploit women (Skilbrei & Holmstrom, 2011). Therefore, through employing such discourse, the website proposes to address the stigmatisation of women as immoral and unlawful (Baratosy & Wendt, 2017; Ditmore, 2008; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017).

The cognitive interface: Social cognition

Hitherto, the Chapter has explored analysable material that is not embedded within the main texts itself. These materials construct the context that facilitates how the reader makes meaning of the texts (van Dijk, 2009). As emphasised in the methods Chapter, the socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis concerns itself, in part, with the meaning-making strategies of groups (van Dijk, 2009). Therefore, developing an understanding of a group's social cognition provides significant insight into the reproduction of discourse. Such insight is developed through exploring the network of ideas embedded within the text (van Dijk, 2009). After careful analysis of the texts, it would appear that the subjects understand their collective identity as cissexual, cisgendered women within a heteropatriarchal society. This is indicated by the manner through which they communicate lived experience along with their participation in the sex trade industry. Moreover, the experiences which they convey highlight particular forces of power that provide the reader with an understanding of their position within the intersectional matrix of domination and subordination. However, their social positioning is often covertly communicated, as will be highlighted in the following section.

Social representation

Black subjectivity

Throughout the texts, the audience is left to assume the racial identities of the subjects through their names and images used on the blog entries. The subjects are overtly depicted as racially ambiguous because their racial identification is not explicitly communicated. However, the audience is presented with various identifying factors that illudes to the subjects' racial identities. As noticed previously, this racial ambiguity is reinforced by the blog entries' use of images. Their race is characterised by using names and pseudonyms of African descent (Text 1;

Text 2; Text 3; Text 4) and African language (Text 1; Text 2) is used in various points throughout the texts. Their race is further informed by their location, where the subjects refer to townships or rural areas (Text 2; Text 3). These areas have traditionally been characterised as black areas by the apartheid government (Ramutsindela, 2013). A shared knowledge is developed about the embodied identity of blackness within the South African social landscape amongst the speaker and the audience. This infers a dominant discourse of blackness, which relates blackness to particular languages, geographies and a working-class socioeconomic status (Stevens et al., 2017). The discourse which manifests reflects the materiality of the body as a consequential space.

The racialisation of the South African society is demonstrated in terms of the norms and standards that have been historically constructed for blackened people. Therefore, this discourse serves to express the conditions of blackness that have been produced in various historical, temporal, and spatial contexts (Stevens et al., 2017). It seems that the nondisclosure of the subjects' blackness means that their black subjectivities are somehow negated within the text. Blackness is, instead, understood as an artifact, developed by racialised discourses that perpetuate tropes of the black identity[26]. Intersectional feminism argues that traditional identity politics ignore intragroup differences (Crenshaw, 1991). It seems that the texts presented within the study follow this trajectory. This means that the resistant possibilities of the blackened body are lost in order to promote such possibilities for the feminised body from a working-class socio-economic background.

[26] Literature indicates that media is populated with oppressive racial ideology, often constructing the black body through colonial imagery (Griffin, 2013). Black women are often depicted through controlling images that forecloses diverse depictions of black womanhood (Griffin, 2013).

The overt nondisclosure of the subjects' blackness evokes an imperial and colonial strategy of power, for their blackness is understood in proximity to whiteness (Gqola, 2015). This is a condition of the racial fragmentation of society, through apartheid and preceding colonial domination, which has led to a biological-type separation within society (Foucault et al., 2008). This has served to treat the population as a grouping of hierarchically subdivided species (Foucault et al., 2008). Intersectional theory suggests that establishing a group without delineating within-group difference often places the needs of the most vulnerable on the periphery (Crenshaw, 1989). This occurs as the needs of the collective often reflect the needs of those who yield the most privilege within the group (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1989, p. 150) describes that:

> *Black women are regarded either as too much like women or Blacks and the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences of either group or as too different, in which case Black women's Blackness or femaleness sometimes has placed their needs and perspectives at the margin of the feminist and Black liberationist agendas.*

Biopolitical theory has argued that the project of race becomes synonymous with the goal of excluding another 'race' from life itself (Cisney & Morar, 2015). In which case, the nondisclosure of the subjects' racial identities neglects to evoke the compounded nature of their oppression. This leads to an uncomprehensive understanding of the challenges that the subjects endure and their respective needs. However, one may contrarily argue that the disclosure of the subjects' racial identity may lead to the enforcement of oppressive conditions. This study aligns with Crenshaw (1991) who takes the position that expressing within group differences may be a

source of liberation for members of a group through its capacity to empower and reconstruct discourse.

It seems that the subjects maintain a psychosocial awareness that the communicative situation demands a self-expression within the racial constraints of white supremacy. This echoes literature on the manner in which blackened people who are considered as *other* often measure themselves in relation to others within the space in terms of both an individual and public identity (Reay, 1998; Stevens et al., 2017). In accordance with the feminist abolitionist model, discussed earlier in this Chapter, the multiple facets of identity are negated in an attempt to essentialise the vulnerability of women and girls as conditional to their biology within a patriarchal society (see Comte, 2014). In so doing, the racial differences amongst women and girls are explicitly overlooked, in order to maintain a discourse of 'prostitution as violence against women.' Crenshaw (1989, 1991) would argue that such a project tends to privilege the needs of white women. The discourse of race, which is captured in the subtleties of the text, may reinforce imperialist hegemonies that echo the aforementioned hierarchical structures of race that has shaped the South African social landscape (Griffiths, 2017; Hansen, 2018).

These subtleties remind the audience of South Africa's racialised history. For instance, the subject discloses in Text 2 that "*[t]he fact remains [she] got bantu education […].*" The subject's reference to Bantu Education directs the audience to the Bantu Education Act no. 47 of 1953. The act, implemented by the apartheid government, distinguishes those citizens declared as non-white from those declared as white and accordingly enforced racially segregated educational facilities. These facilities played a central role in maintaining the apartheid ideology of racial segregation (Spaull, 2013).

This was one of many strategies implemented by the apartheid government to disenfranchise the non-white residents of South Africa (Bunting, 2006). Literature has evidenced that Bantu Education was paramount to the development of a cheap, unskilled labour force consisting of the country's black majority population (Bunting, 2006; Moore, 2015). Black pupils were integrated into schools that were under-resourced and overpopulated (McKeever, 2017). The curriculum of Bantu schools was characterised by 'native' learning, which translated into sub-standard educational programmes (Moore, 2015). These programmes were developed to reinforce the conditions of oppression through providing a curriculum to black South Africans with the bare minimum in terms of education needed for labour (Moore, 2015). This meant that black pupils were provided with an education that ensured low literacy and numerical comprehension (Spaull, 2013). Black pupils were consequently disadvantaged when entering the labour market, as their level of education permitted them to a limited range of job opportunities, generally oriented toward manual labour (McKeever, 2017; Moore, 2015).

The texts relate to such disadvantages, as all the subjects communicate that they are uneducated and lack the necessary skills to find a job. In Text 3 the subject asserts that *"[…] I'm uneducated. I didn't finish school and it's not easy for me to find a job.*" While Text 4 asserts that "*[…] all the 'sex workers' who have indicated […] that they would be doing something else under different circumstances, women expressed the desire for skills development programmes, formal jobs and assistance in business start-ups.*" The subjects' compounding experience as black and woman further reinforce the conditions of oppression. This is as literature acknowledges that the labour market tends to privilege white bodies as the history of apartheid still impacts economic achievement for black people (McKeever, 2017). In light of intersectionality, it is understood that multiply-burdened groups such as black women from a

working-class background, and from rural areas, are less likely to find employment (Mbiyozo, 2018; McKeever, 2017).

The subjects state that their entry into the system of prostitution were the result of a wide range of socioeconomic challenges. The system of prostitution was an accessible economic environment for one subject because she witnessed her mother's participation within sex trade (Text 1). Another subject experienced the sex trade industry as alluring because it was portrayed as glamourous to her (Text 4). The texts indicate that the subjects developed particular perceptions of the sex trade industry as a result of their social environment. It seems that their perceptions were constructed by their limited access to information. It is hypothesised that this lack of knowledge maintained by the subjects encouraged their participation in the system of prostitution. Furthermore, the perceptions that the subjects maintained were all developed within working class socioeconomic conditions. Literature by Mbiyozo (2018) describes that women from working class socio-economic conditions are often vulnerable to exploitation as they have limited access to information. Such women tend to be more isolated and less aware of laws (Mbiyozo, 2018). The subjects were, therefore, compelled into precarious self-employment, which is unprotected by law. The texts illustrate that the subjects were able to enter the sex trade industry with relative ease above any other economic environment.

McKeever (2017) found that the legacy of Bantu education established significant inequalities within South Africa's present labour market. The study noted that the education and occupation of caregivers is correlated to the educational achievement of participants (McKeever, 2017). It is understood that a caregiver's education and occupation affect the economic resources of a household, which impacts the educational outcome of a child (McKeever, 2017). This means that the legacy of educational inequality has created longstanding economic inequalities for black

South Africans. Spaull (2013) confers, indicating that historically black schools remain largely dysfunctional. These schools are generally located within working-class settlements that are demographically characterised by a majority black residency (Spaull, 2013). This served the agenda of the apartheid government who undermined the status of blackened people through conceptualising them as subordinate to white people. Moreover, it means that the historic inequality within educational institutions has established conditions for intergenerational poverty.

As noted previously, all texts examined within the current study relay that the subjects are uneducated and that they are unable to participate in skilled labour, due to socioeconomic constraints. Text 1 communicates that "*[…] prostitution is not a free choice but a choice some of us had to make because of circumstances […]*". This may be derivative of the apartheid government's objective to create an unskilled labour force that consists of a black majority, as evidenced hitherto. However, within the subjects' nondisclosure of their racial identity the audience may negate the particularity of their racial experiences; therefore, disregarding the impact of apartheid policies. For example, in Text 1 the subject discloses that she entered the sex trade industry at the age of 13 years in order to assist her mother who was also in the sex trade industry. The audience is led to the assumption that the subject is black through covert semantic features and her use of an African language within the text when she refers to stigmatisation that she encounters by her community, through words like "*marhosha*" and "*sefebe*" (Text 1). Her participation within the sex trade industry aligns with literature that addresses the conditions of intergenerational poverty and the conditions of economic inequality for black South Africans (Mckeever, 2017). It is clear that the subject's experience is shaped by a history of poor educational achievement and a consequent inability to participate in skilled labour. The subject

acknowledges that her mother's participation in the sex trade industry motivated her own participation. When understood in light of McKeever's (2017) findings, the legacy of racism which contributed to the subject's circumstances becomes unavoidable. Yet, easily neglected by the audience due to the ambiguity of race within the texts, as previously indicated.

The discourse presented within the texts can be traced to the apartheid government's intention to produce an unskilled labour force amongst blackened South Africans. This concurs with Bunting (2006), who noted that South Africa's educational system during apartheid was developed with the intention to disenfranchise blackened South Africans. In consideration of the biopolitical landscape, it is understood that the Bantu education act positioned non-white South Africans in precarious living conditions which is evident within the current study. This is emphasised in Text 3, when the participant mentions: "*I am thinking about leaving prostitution but I'm uneducated. I didn't finish high school and it's not easy for me to find a job. This is the only way that I'm able to put bread on the table.*" The subject's account expresses a condition of subordination, as the labour market demands educational proficiencies which she has been unable to attain. Utilising the analogy of "*[putting] bread on the table*" it becomes apparent that her participation in the sex trade industry is necessary for life itself. This resonates with the biopolitical project of excluding another race from life itself, as indicated by Cisney and Morar (2015). The biopolitical project that encumbers participation in sex trade as necessary for life itself is further observed in Text 2, where the subject writes "*[…] you end up selling your body for any money that comes your way […].*" The subject expresses how her participation in the sex trade industry is necessary for her survival, however her participation simultaneously renders her vulnerable to various forms of exploitation.

Even when subjects attempted to further their education, they were unable to do so because the income they received through their labour was not sufficient to cover the cost for further studies. This is relative to their inability to access services, as is the case in Text 2. The text relays how the subject was forced to drop out of "*varsity*", as she did not have sufficient funds (Text 2). The texts indicate how prostituted women are faced with various obstacles when they attempt to improve their economic participation. Cisney and Morar (2015) explain that the inability to access services is a biopolitical attempt of the dominant population to exclude subordinate groups from civil and political participation, despite their numerous attempts for inclusion.

The analysis highlights that prostituted women, as noted in the texts, have a willingness to participate in a neoliberal economy (Harvey, 2005), however they do not experience sex work as labour. This discourse of sex work as non-labour is emphasised in the title of Text 4, as previously indicated. It is also echoed in Text 1, where the subject describes that "*[prostitution] is not a future we can offer our girls*". For these subjects, sex work is conceptualised as exploitative and participation is conditional to difficult socioeconomic circumstances. These findings contradict literature that views sex work as a marketable economic activity (Clarke, 2004; Mathieson et al., 2016). Furthermore, in light of such discourse, a contestation is observed amongst the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act 32 of 2007 and the experiences of the subjects. The act characterises prostituted women as sex workers, which infers a neoliberal ontology (Mathieson et al., 2016). This means that the law characterises prostituted women with personal choice and individual freedom to respond to the demand for sex (Clarke, 2004; Mathieson et al., 2016). However, the experiences of the subjects, as mentioned here, suggests otherwise.

Conceptualisations of womanhood: The subject-object dialect

The texts ascribe a covert distinction between conceptualisations of human and alienated humanity, which occurs in reference to the objectification of the prostituted woman. This is observed through the biopolitical conceptualisation of power, as Mills (2015) theorises that the normalisation of dominant rationalities serves a central role within biopolitics. To this regard, it seems that the aspects of the prostituted women that correspond to dominant conceptions of womanhood is conceptualised within the framework of 'humanity' (Wittig, 1992). This aspect of the prostituted women within the texts are provided with the properties of the subject that exists with an awareness and distinct agency - an aspect of the self that is not 'forced'. Literature conceptualises that humanity has traditionally been understood in proximity to heteropatriarchal whiteness (Gqola, 2015; Stevens et al., 2017). The normalised rationality that arises within the texts, as will be elaborated, is distinguished in relation to conceptualisations of womanhood. The study observes that alienated humanity is understood as the objectified self, who is regarded as an empty object in which the desires and needs of the patriarchy is deposited. This concurs with the writing of Carter and Grobbe (1999), as described in the literature review. Thus, alienated humanity is regarded as concurrent with processes of objectification which seeks to supress certain populations. Those who are classified as alienated are relative to the dominant (and simultaneously naturalised) group that have subjugated them.

The conceptualisation that has been introduced here, and that will be discussed within this section, is based on the theoretical underpinning that knowledge is power (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). In the dialectical understanding that knowledge is power, knowledge refers to the construction of realities, through language, that is deployed onto the human mind (Foucault & Hurley, 1990). Dominant rationalities of womanhood and sexuality is observed in the texts. Such

rationalities are situated in the sociocultural domain, as will be indicated in this section. Moreover, a dominant rationality of sexuality can be observed in South African law. This is observed in relation to Foucault and Hurley (1990) who describe that sexualities which are connotated to an unlawfulness is socially abnormalised. This relates to social processes of knowledge-making that serve to conceptualise prostituted sexualities as abnormal.

The dyad of the human-alienated human relationship is established within a conflict between subjective needs and desires, and the sense of objectification through economic demands. It seems that the prostituted woman lives according to the economic demands of her social environment, but she is simultaneously unable to access the economic environment. The texts illicit various needs and desires of the subjects that require access to the economic environment. This includes the desire to care for family members, as in Text 1 where the subject notes that "*[t]his whole situation forced me to go back again to the street to sell my body in order to take care of my children*". Furthermore, Text 2 expresses the desire of developing educational proficiencies, when stating "*[…] I was hoping to save that money to return to Varsity […]*" (Text 2). Finally, all texts elicit the subjects' desires of meeting their monetary needs (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). The subjects express that entry into the sex trade industry was within their agential capacity, even though it was motivated by a range of socioeconomic circumstances. These findings contrast with Robinson (2007) who argues that prostituted women do not have agency in their choice of labour. However, it seems more accurate to concur with Moran and Farley (2019), as previously referenced, that sex work is a "*choice that is not a choice*" (p. 2) for the women represented by the texts. It is understood that their continuity within the trade establishes a process of dehumanisation in which their agential capacity diminishes.

The current study observes that their continuity within the sex trade industry is facilitated by their socioeconomic conditions, which constrains their agential capacity.

The texts indicate that the subjects develop particular perceptions of the system of prostitution as a result of their social environment, which made it seem to be an accessible economic environment prior to entry. As stated in Text 4, where the subject describes that the sex trade industry was portrayed as glamourous prior to entering it. It seems that these perceptions were constructed by their limited access to information. This concurs with Mbiyozo (2018) who describes that women from working class socio-economic conditions are often vulnerable to exploitation as they have limited access to information. It is hypothesised that the agential capacity of the prostituted woman, from a low socioeconomic background, may develop as a result of her socioeconomic circumstances. Therefore, the texts portray that the subjects' agential capacity, as well as their related subjectivity and humanity is constrained by socioeconomic conditions.

The prostituted woman's experience is further constrained by her sense of being prostituted and being a woman. The texts indicate that the subjects maintain conflicting mental models, as their sense of being prostituted and being a woman are incompatible. For example, Text 1 asserts that "*prostitution has undermined my dignity […] I am called names in front of my children*". In the text, the subject parallels her experiences as a mother and a prostituted woman, where her motherhood is undermined through the way she is characterised by her community. This discourse is complicated by the central role of sexuality within African womanhood and conceptualisations of prostitution. African womanhood has traditionally been regarded indispensable from a woman's capacity to mother within heteropatriarchal societies (Lake, 2014; Moreau, 2015). Due to the constraints of being a prostituted woman, she is forced to make

meaning of her commodified sexuality, as an object that is separate from the self. Therefore, in order to cope with her sense of objectification, the prostituted woman compartmentalises her sense of self from her laborious efforts. That is, she separates her identity as a woman (and respectively a mother) from her laborious efforts. She ascribes her psychological challenges to her laborious efforts that society deems as asocial. It seems that the prostituted woman utilises a conservative ontology to conceptualise her commodified sexuality, which perpetuates a sense of shame (see: Gqola, 2015)

These findings are in line with Gqola (2015), who describes that the psychological construct of shame is a function of oppression. It is conferred by Text 3 where it is noted that "*as a prostituted woman, [the subject] harbours a lot of shame.*" The psychological construct of shame is observed in all texts. Gqola (2015) describes that shame indicates those who are valued in society and those who are alienated. Shame is regarded as an apparatus of dehumanisation (Gqola, 2015), which the current study understands as alienated humanity. In relation to biopolitics, the current study argues that the prostituted body is alienated and reduced to conditions of a social death (Mbembe, 2003). This occurs as they do not meet the conditions of women's sexuality within a heteropatriarchal society (Butler, 1988; Wittig, 1992). Literature develops this understanding of shame from an intersectional perspective through describing that the social system is designed to degrade the oppressed (Gqola, 2015). To this regard, the subject's gender, sexuality, race and class are juxtaposed by images of an ideal humanity within the social landscape, which is defined by white capitalism, white supremacy and heteropatriarchy (Gqola, 2015).

The current study observes that the texts deploy an ontology of sexuality, which views the institution of prostitution as sexually perverse – it is noted when subjects associate shame to

their participation in the institution of prostitution, as depicted earlier. As Gqola (2015) describes shame represents that which society characterises as abnormal. The discourse of sexual perversion concurs with Foucault and Hurley (1990), who conceptualised that sexuality is socially stratified along a continuum of natural and unnatural expression. The naturalised expression of sexuality is centred around the female anatomy, which is made meaningful within a heteronormative ideological framework (Wittig, 1992). African women's sexuality and gender have traditionally been viewed as indistinguishable and primarily centred around their ability for heterosexuality and motherhood (Lake, 2014; Moreau, 2015). The texts indicate the contestation between the naturalised, heteronormative sexuality and the prostituted sexuality. This tension is observed when a subject describes in Text 3 that developing a romantic relationship is exceptionally difficult when selling sexual acts and that "*It's better not to tell your boyfriend you're in sex trade. I would lose my dignity and he would look at me differently*".

Furthermore, the texts indicate that prostituted women are often marginalised within their community. This study concurs with Brown (2012), who argues that sexuality and gender identity is not a free choice for African women; rather, it is a requirement in belonging to their community. It is observed here that the subjects' social ties within their communities are obstructed by the prejudice and stigma attached to perceptions of prostitution. Text 1 asserts, "*I'm called names such as marhosha – that what women who sell their bodies are called, sefebe – a whore etc in front of my children*" (Text 1). The prostituted women are susceptible to verbal harassment by community members because they do not meet the biopolitical requirements of African womanhood.

The human-alienated human dialect is further observed in reference to the commodification of sexuality and the simultaneous objectification of the female body. To this

regard, the female body and its' sexual properties are perceived as the empty vessel that serves the needs of the buyer. Text 2 depicts "*[…] as long as the man hasn't reached an orgasm then he can have sex with you for however long he wants. And then there's that gentle reminder with piercing eyes that says I have paid for having sex with you therefore submit yourself and let me finish […]*". The buyer, who is likely a cisgender male, is conceptualised with sexual needs that are satisfied within the man-woman heteronormative sexual relationship. The interpersonal dialect of the human alienated human relationship, observed within the text, concurs with Vuolajärvi (2018) who understands that women's consent to sexual relations is commodified through oppressive forces. These oppressive forces transcend the demand to satisfy sexual needs, because prostituted women are physically violated (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4), often beat, murdered and raped (Text 1). This means that the prostituted woman must become devoid of her personal identity in order to meet the needs of buyers (Carter & Grobbe, 1999). The transaction between the seller and the buyer of sexual services serves the ideological function of reinforcing masculinity. The current study's findings align with literature, which argues that the process of objectification establishes sufficient grounds for the dehumanisation of the prostituted woman and the fortification of masculinity (Carter & Grobbe, 1999; Robinson, 2007).

All texts identify buyers as men, often negating the intersections of their identity. Text 4 expresses that buyers are "*Asians, Indians, Whites and Blacks*," who would seek unusual sexual services. The subject acknowledges that she was "*objectified*" and "*defiled*" when selling sexual acts to men (Text 4). She recalls these experiences as painful and traumatic. The subject's experiences concur with literature, which characterises the process of commodification and objectification as the disembodiment of the prostituted woman (Carter & Grobbe, 1999). The discourse of disembodiment is characterised by an array of psychological challenges relative to

the commodification of sexual acts (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). It is in this process of commodification in which the prostituted woman is subjugated to the needs of heteronormative patriarchy. In Text 2 this is observed as the "*violation*" of a buyer asking how much the subject is selling for. Text 3 asserts that the subject would use alcohol as a means of coping with her psychological challenges. The body of feminist literature that has acknowledged that these psychological challenges are the result of the commodification and objectification of the female body, has also noted that the female body becomes a resource of patriarchal and capitalist powers (Mathieson et al., 2016).

Text 3 refers to the buyers in terms of their labour, indicating that buyers are generally truck drivers. This thickens the audience's understanding of the buyer, whose sexual needs must be fulfilled in order to successfully meet the demands of his labour. The prostituted woman serves as a means to an end within this process of objectification. The study concurs with Comte (2014) who argues that the male demand for sex work is the driving force of the sex trade industry. The prostituted woman is constructed as a necessary object within a larger productive effort within a capitalist system. This allows the heteronormative man to effectively complete his labour to meet economical demands. Arguably, within the transactional relationship of the prostituted woman and the buyer, the prostituted woman takes on the qualities of the nonhuman in order to meet the needs of the buyer through a process of disembodiment (Carter & Grobbe, 1999). The buyer becomes the human-subject, whose masculinity allows him to fulfil his needs (Mathieson et al., 2016). The current study concurs with literature which notes that the history of oppression that women have endured, continues for the prostituted women (Carter & Grobbe, 1999; Mackinnon, 1994; Mathieson et al., 2016; Moran & Farley, 2019). Therefore, these

prostituted women in South Africa experience conditions that empower traditional male subjectivity.

Marginal citizenship

The subjects primarily source their income from street-based prostitution (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3). Their precarious self-employment means that they do not have appropriate labour rights (Mathieson et al., 2016). This is in reference to South Africa's legal system that does not consider sex work as labour deserving of appropriate labour rights. This means that their working conditions are not standardised. The criminalisation of sex work further forces the subjects into dangerous working environments (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). The subjects are required to sell sexual services in remote locations, where they would not be caught by the police. However, this increases the risk of physical and sexual violence that they may experience from buyers. The subjects express that prostituted women are beaten, raped and murdered by buyers (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3; Text 4). Buyers often disregard the terms and conditions that prostituted women set, which relate to the subject-object dialect expressed earlier in the Chapter. The analysis of the data concurs with literature which notes that women are subordinated by buyers when selling sexual acts (Comte, 2014; Dewey, 2012; Kesler, 2002; Satz, 2010; Waltman, 2011). This subordination is experienced as disempowerment through "*structural economic and patriarchal […] violence against women*" (Text 4). The experience of the subjects are located in precarious labour, which may disenfranchise prostituted women to the point of death. This is observed in Text 2, where the subject notes, "*[w]hen you enter a car you don't know if you will come back alive or not.*"

The criminalisation of sex work and the lack of labour rights set up the conditions for dangerous, exploitative and unprotected labour (Mathieson et al., 2016; Plat et al., 2018; Schular,

2016). The subjects indicate that they experience difficulty in accessing services such as the police, as they note that "*[police] do not take us serious*" (Text 1). Literature has evidenced that the difficulty prostituted women experience in accessing social services is a consequence of a political project to eradicate the sex trade industry through criminalisation (Cohan & Lutnick, 2009; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). However, this tends to reinforce the conditions that lead prostituted women into the sex trade industry (Cohan & Lutnick, 2009; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). Furthermore, in concurrence with the findings of the analysis, the criminalisation of sex trade leads to the violation of numerous human and civil rights of the prostituted woman (Ditmore, 2008; Mackinnon, 1994; Vuolajärvi, 2018). This resonates with Mackinnon (1994) and Scorgie et al. (2013) who argued that prostituted women are often unrecognised or rendered invisible in the eyes of the law.

Literature has evidenced that the marginal citizenship that prostituted women experience is rooted in neoconservatism. It is the ontology of neoconservatism which frames the criminalisation of sex work (Mathieson et al., 2016). As previously mentioned, the analysis of the data reveals that the subjects are experienced as immoral and unlawful by their community. The individual freedom of the subjects are constricted by the collective values and morals of society. The subjects are often left powerless to report the abuses that they face, because of discrimination by the outgroup. The abuses that they face often go unpunished because they are unable to access the necessary resources. These resources include police protection, as Text 1 asserts "*[…] we are afraid of going to the police because they do not take us serious*". Moreover, Text 2 expresses that "*I had to run around trying to find pep and in every clinic I went to I was told I knew my risk when I started selling my body and therefore I cannot get pep*" which indicates an inability to access health services. It is noted that the prostituted women are unable

to access these services due to the prejudice that they face from the outgroup which is rooted in the neoconservative ontology. Literature concurs, noting that the criminalisation of sex trade consequences prostituted women's inability to access social services (Cohan & Lutnick, 2009; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017). Therefore, indicating that violence and stigma against prostituted women are institutionalised as a means to render them invisible (Plat et al., 2018).

The marginal citizenship that the subjects experience in this study is relative to a myriad of conditions that are unrecognised within legal systems. These findings have similarly been evidenced by Mathieson et al. (2016), who note that women's inequality within a patriarchal society contributes to their participation within the sexual marketplace. Literature has described that women's disproportionate legal sanctioning is a consequence of the Judeo-Christian and heteronormative patriarchal tradition that reinforces men's dominance and subsequent access to greater social freedoms (Mathieson et al., 2016).

The discourse of care

In Text 1 and Text 3, the subjects' identification as women are characterised by the multiple roles that they occupy as sisters, daughters, mothers, and wives. Their characterisation as women is developed within an intersectional framework that includes their compounded experiences of womanhood (Collins, 1990). Text 1 expresses that the subject began selling sexual acts to assist her mother in raising her four younger siblings. She understands poverty as a major influence for her participation in the sex trade industry. The text illustrates how the subject's desire to care for her family was tied to her experience as a daughter and a sister. The nature of care, referred to in the text, is a direct response to poverty; therefore, the subject experiences care in a continous dialectic relationship with poverty. The texts further correlate to literature which indicate that women, within a heteronormative family structure, are generally

given a greater duty to care for their family, as opposed to men (Mbiyozo, 2018). It seems that the discourse of care maintains a biological preoccupation, as the texts essentialise it to womanhood through reinforcing a relationship between being a sister, daughter, mother or wife and responsibility to care. Based on biopolitics, it is hypothesised that women shoulder the responsibility to care as it relates to a naturalised characterisation of womanhood (Repo, 2013). These roles that the subjects occupy evoke a discourse of the gendered division of labour within the household and the generational roles of women within the heteronormative family structure (Bhana, 2010). This concurs with literature which notes that the expression of womanhood has traditionally been characterised by duties relative to motherhood (Lake, 2014; Moreau, 2015).

Text 1 depicts how the discourse of care has been shaped by the conditions of poverty and simultaneously altered traditional expression of womanhood. Literature concurs, revealing that the discourse of care has been altered by the sociopolitical history of the South African society, including poverty, which altered family structures (Mbiyozo, 2018). The text indicates that poverty was broadly experienced as difficult circumstances for the subject (Text 1). These conditions of poverty cannot be separated from the racialised history of the South African society (Lues, 2005). Therefore, an intersectional analysis of the expression of womanhood is necessary to understand its relationship with the conditions of poverty.

The text illustrate that the gender roles are intimately bound to their perceived duty as caretakers and a financial responsibility to provide for their family. As literature has noted, black African women have traditionally been objectified through their reproductive function and a duty to shoulder domestic responsibilities (Bhana, 2010). Moreover, black African households have traditionally been dominated by patriarchal powers where men have maintained control over the access to resources and the sexual division of labour within the household (Bhana, 2010).

Therefore, the analysis observes that the historic conditions of African women's gender expression is influenced by a myriad of social systems.

African women's domestic responsibilities were altered, as the apartheid government's demand for cheap labour increased (Bhana, 2010). While being forced to seek work within an oppressive economic environment, their domestic responsibilities remained (Bhana, 2010). The texts indicate that the subjects' participation in the sex trade industry is cradled by the desire to improve the economic condition of their families (Text 1). The subjects shoulder responsibilities such as caring for family members and financing household expenses once they start generating income (Text 1). The study observes that the discourse of care is a motivating factor that led the subjects into the system of prostitution. It seems that black female sex workers' entrance into the sex trade industry has formally and informally been conditioned by sociocultural forces of African womanhood, educational systems and the sexual division of labour (Bhana, 2010).

Geography, movement and displacement

The discourse of care is compounded by the discourse of geography, movement and displacement and a discourse of loss for some subjects (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3). The discourse of displacement relates to literature on the history of migration within South Africa, which led to the separation of numerous blackened families. Although the historic conditions of migration were not overtly referred to within the texts, it is necessary to understand that current migration patterns are rooted in systems emplaced by the apartheid government (Bhana, 2010). The discourse of movement, which were inferred to in Text 2 and Text 3, negatively impacted the subjects' social and familial structures. As in Text 3, where the subject expresses that she has not been home for ten years; the subject notes that she could die, and her family would not even know (Text 3). The texts illustrate how movement disrupted familial ties. Some subjects indicate

that they have lost contact with their communities of origin, including their siblings and parents, while other subjects continue to support their families. This parallels literature which found that migration patterns of black women in South Africa tend to disrupt family structures (Mbiyozo, 2018). Once a subject would migrate in hopes of securing more income, she would lose contact with her family of origin. The loss in contact is often disclosed relative to her limited resources. Thus, the conditions of prostitution make it difficult for the subject to contact her family of origin due to the limited access in resources. This refers to the discourse of marginal citizenship, as discussed earlier within the Chapter.

The discourse of loss and displacement disrupt the traditional construction of the heteronormative family and related gender norms, where men are traditionally expected to provide for the family's financial needs (Mbiyozo, 2018). It forces women into precarious labour because of the financial burden that is placed on them. This is the case in Text 1, where the subject describes losing a loved one and experiencing what Mbiyozo (2018) defines as the 'triple burden' of securing employment, managing domestic duties and maintaining reproductive responsibilities. Similarly, the discourse of loss, as expressed in Text 3, relates to the death of a breadwinner, which also forces the subject to take on financial responsibilities.

This study considers these discourses relative to geography, movement and displacement within the sociohistorical context in South African society. Subjects often refer to the spatial contexts of rural areas and urban areas when discussing their generational roles and their home life (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3). There is a simultaneous acknowledgement to the conditions of poverty within these geographical areas that the subjects experienced which shaped their experiences. This is indicative of the symbolic arrangement of society, as discussed in Chapter 2. This is a biopolitical process that arranges bodies within particular geographical spaces. For the

subjects, their home-life is characterised by conditions that ensure a status of subhuman (Cisney & Morar, 2015), such as increased exposure to poverty, violence and poor health resources (Text 1; Text 2; Text 3).

The study notes that the spatial context thickens the discourse of care, as it provides a racial and historic context to their experience (see: Stevens et al., 2017). It is hypothesised that the subjects' home life, and consecutively their gendered and generational roles, have been shaped by the precarious living conditions constructed for blackened people by the apartheid government (see Mbembe, 2003). Mbembe (2003) outlines that the apartheid government manipulated townships and rural areas to meet the political needs of the white minority. Whereby townships and rural areas were used to control the flow of migrant labour and African urbanisation through racist policies (Mbembe, 2003). Therefore, geography, movement and displacement has a political implication, which has impacted the lives of the subjects.

When a subject assert that she is from a rural area in Text 2, the audience is immediately drawn to the history of subjugation that occurred in rural areas. The apartheid regime subjugated rural areas through maintaining its poverty. This occurred through policies which forced men to search for work within urban areas, while their families remained in the respective rural area (Lues, 2005). This was predominantly done through a stringent tax-system that led men to migrate for work, often alienating them from their family (Lues, 2005). Literature has evidenced that men's migration from rural areas to urban areas led to many men ceasing to provide financial support. This created significant socioeconomic challenges for families who depended on men for economic security (Lues, 2005). African women were forced to take on financial responsibility; however, they experienced severe barriers in accessing the economic environment (Lues, 2005). This meant that rural areas became increasingly impoverished. These conditions

are observed in Text 1, when the subject describes coming from a single parent household that was headed by her mother. The socioeconomic challenges that the subject experienced were so significant that she entered the system of prostitution to assist her mother at the age of 13 years.

These policies governed blackened people's participation within the economic environment and impacted their living conditions (Bhana, 2010). Bhana (2010), in line with Mbembe (2003), writes that these policies served to undermine rural livelihoods and further states that it significantly affected gender relations. These institutional challenges disrupted the structure of blackened families and altered the lives of blackened women. This means that the living conditions of the subject are situated within a sociopolitical project that subordinated blackened people and disrupted their family structures. The consequences of these institutional challenges are observed in the subjects' participation in the economic environment, which is often referred to as forced (Text 3; Text 4). Literature has indicated that blackened women experienced increased difficulty when participating in the economic environment due to discriminatory education and inappropriate skills development that guided women to become wives and mothers (Lues, 2005).

It seems that the texts foster the audience's conceptualisation of poverty as the material conditions the subjects were born into, as well as the consequence of the subjects' material existence. Thus, poverty is understood as a biopolitical expression of power that creates a fragmentation amongst the population, which naturalised the disenfranchisement of blackened women (Cisney & Morar, 2015; Foucault et al., 2008). An inextricable movement exists between the role of poverty and the intersections of race, sex and gender. These circumstances, therefore, refer to the multidimensional conditions of being that limit the opportunities for particular bodies within society. It further reveals that human life cannot be understood outside of the political

forces, which organises meaning in society (Cisney & Morar, 2015; Foucault et al., 2008). Blackened, female bodies within South Africa are covertly characterised by archaic meaning-making strategies which were ingrained into the fabric of South African society during imperialism and colonisation. Thus, the blackened female body is subjugated to precarious conditions of otherwise, understood as a social death (Mbembe, 2003).

Conclusion

The Chapter presented the findings and discussion of the current study. The socio-cognitive model of critical discourse studies was applied to analyse the texts. It was noted that the communicative situation was organised through heteronormative language, which developed a conceptual space to interpret the prostituted women represented by the texts as heterosexual, cisgender women. The gendered oppression of prostituted women was observed throughout the Chapter and placed in conversation with the sex dichotomy, as a form of biologised patriarchy. The use of the abolitionist model within the communicative situation by the organisation provided insight to the manner in which prostituted women are organised within an economy of power in South Africa. The textual representations of the prostituted women concurred with the abolitionist feminist framework presented by the organisation.

The study noted that the exploitation which prostituted women experience is impacted by the societal process of the feminisation of the biologically determined female body. To this regard, it was argued that the sociopolitical conditions of womanhood that develops as a result of the feminised body position women within precarious conditions that enable exploitation. It was observed, in relation to literature, that these conditions enable the objectification and dehumanisation of women. It was argued that the feminised body becomes a site of patriarchal domination. This description was thickened through examination of numerous resources that were

provided within the communicative situation such as images, titles and hyperlinks. These resources conveyed the economic conditions that enable the exploitation of women. In reference to literature, it was noted that the condition of prostituted women's oppression occurs through a neoliberal monetary arrangement. Moreover, this study agrees that prostitution is a condition of economic inequality between men and women, concurring with authors such as Dewey (2012), Kesler (2002) and Satz (2010). However, economic inequality seems to be a symptom of histories of racial and gender inequality in South Africa. The study found that the prostituted women's entry into the sex trade industry is facilitated by various forms of oppression.

The study acknowledged that characterising the oppression faced by prostituted women from the singular axis of womanhood would hamper a comprehensive understanding of the subjects. Therefore, aspects such as race were explored. It was found that racialised experiences were covertly communicated throughout the texts. These experiences were observed through the lens of sociohistorical systems of oppression that aimed to disenfranchise blackened people in South Africa. To this regard, the study observed throughout the review of literature that the institute of race was developed as a means to oppress black people, especially black women. Educational and labour systems were investigated as it related to the texts. The study found that the history of Bantu education and the apartheid government's attempt to develop an unskilled labour force may have fostered conditions for the exploitation of black women. The gendered nature of these institutions were discussed in relation to the texts. It was noted that black women have endured a complexity that arises for black women considering that they are expected to participate in a neoliberal society, but the aforementioned institutions have made it increasingly difficult to so. These conditions place the prostituted women, represented by the texts, in

conditions paramount to the death function. That is, prostituted women have been positioned within contexts that supress their lives.

The textual representation of gender elucidated that prostituted women may experience their sense of womanhood through a subject-object dialect. This distinction was observed through the conflicting mental models that were distinguished between the normalised sense of womanhood and their alienated sexuality. Their alienated sexuality was observed through the processes of commodification and objectification that they endure. This was otherwise considered as human-alienated human dialect. It was noted that the prostituted women, represented by the text, experience a conflict between their subjective needs and desires, and the sense of objectification through economic demands which informs the commodification of their sexuality. The alienation of black prostituted women was understood in the context of intersectionality.

Chapter five: Conclusion

The following Chapter provides an overview of the current study. Conclusions are presented in relation to the research question that was established at the outset of the study. The strengths and limitations of the current study are expressed. Moreover, possible directions for future research are noted.

Summary

The current study explored the possible intersections of gender, sex, sexuality and racial identity for prostituted women in post-apartheid South Africa, as they were conveyed through the objects of analysis. It was understood that the scope of relevant literature within the domain of prostitution often organises those who sell sex into a simultaneous conflating and dichotomous language of sex work and sex trafficking which is mitigated by a discourse of choice (Yingwana et al., 2019). It is noted that choice is informed by person's position within the matrix of privilege and oppression. The boundaries between the discourse of sex work and sex trafficking are ambiguous, in consideration of the gender and racial inequality that was observed within the current study. Broad stroke conceptualisations of sex work that solely view sex workers as individuals with personal choice and individual freedom (Clarke, 2004) are not feasible in light of the intersectional identities of prostituted women.

The current study attempted to understand the intersectional identities of black prostituted women in South Africa, without distorting their experience through a singular axis of oppression (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Motsemme, 2002). Literature on the numerous social identities of black prostituted women in South Africa were retrieved, which yielded a depth of understanding within the genealogy of their identity. Examining the sociopolitical and historical conditions of blackness, womanhood and prostitution within various domains, this study began

to develop an understanding of how prostituted women are hierarchically organised into an economy of power. Moreover, the review of literature approached the fragmentation of South Africa's society and black prostituted women's concurrent social positioning through examining the institutionalisation of whiteness and heteropatriarchy. The politicisation of the features of the fleshy existence of the human became increasingly apparent and was situated in the context of biopolitics. These include the politicisation of the colour of a person's skin, the sex assigned to them at birth and a sexuality which is dictated as natural or unnatural.

The socio-cognitive model of critical discourse studies (van Dijk, 2009) was utilised to engage with the textually represented identities of prostituted women in post-apartheid South Africa. The current study was organised within the epistemology of social constructionism, which argues that knowledge and power is interconnected (Cresswell et al., 2006). To this regard, the theoretical framework of biopolitics and intersectional feminism was deployed to understand how particular forms of power were expressed within the texts and related to the social identity of the subjects. The subjects of the texts were four prostituted women who conveyed their personal experiences on blog entries posted by the non-government organisation, *Embrace Dignity* (Tshelane, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). The choice to centralise the voices of black prostituted women was motivated by the need to counter the oppression of a group that literature understands as multiply-burdened (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Gqola, 2015; Motsemme, 2002).

The use of texts that were published in the public domain, enabled the current study to sensitively engage with a marginalised community without posing risk of harm. However, several tensions became apparent during the research as I am a white, queer body, assigned male at birth. Keeping in mind the interconnected relationship of knowledge and power, it was my

responsibility to maintain a continous critical awareness of the reproduction of knowledge that mirrors the construction of whiteness and masculinity throughout the research process. The current study attempted to centralise the voices of black prostituted women through honouring the construction of meaning within the objects of analysis. Moreover, this extended into respecting the diverse perspectives that are represented by the scope of literature. Maintaining a relational understanding that my social identity, as the researcher, may impact the study allowed for a research process that was continuously refined.

The study found that the prostituted women represented by the texts communicate their identity in overt and covert ways that facilitate a cognitive interface between the speaker and reader of the texts. The texts positioned the prostituted women within a matrix of experiences relative to their identities. The objects of analysis constituted a conceptual space that informed an interpretation of the prostituted women within the parameters of heteronormativity. It was understood that the subjects experience gendered oppression, as they are socially subjugated through the naturalisation of the sex dichotomy. The feminisation of the biologically determined female body, as indicated by feminist literature (Wittig, 1992), means that prostituted women are positioned in conditions that enable patriarchal domination. Moreover, the racialisation (blackening) of the feminised body means that the prostituted women who are represented by the texts are located in sociopolitical and historical systems of oppression that aimed to disenfranchise black people in South Africa. This includes the development of a cheap, unskilled labour force consisting of the country's black majority population through the racialised and gendered institution of Bantu education (Bunting, 2006; Moore, 2015). It should be noted that the subjects' racial identities were covertly communicated. Moreover, geopolitical discourse such as migration and conditions relative to rurality and townships were conveyed through the

texts. These conditions meant that the prostituted women represented by the text developed particular perceptions of the sex trade industry which facilitated their entry into prostitution.

The texts indicate that prostituted women experience conflicts within their gender and sexual identity. These conflicts are covertly communicated within the texts and provide insight into conceptualisations of humanity and alienated humanity. The current study found that the sense of humanity aligned with heteronormative womanhood which facilitated a perception of normality. However, the conceptualisation of alienated humanity is developed through the discourses of economic and sexual objectification that prostituted women endure. To this regard, the findings conveyed that the commodified bodies of black prostituted women and its' relative sexual properties are perceived as empty vessels that serve the needs of male buyers (Carter & Grobbe, 1999). The black prostituted women represented by the texts are required to sell sexual services in remote locations, where they would not be caught by the police. This increases the risk of physical and sexual violence that they may experience from buyers.

The texts express a discourse of gender-based violence, which is perpetuated by the criminalisation of sex work in South Africa. Prostituted women are often socially perceived as immoral and unlawful, which normalises their marginal access to the institution of citizenship – this includes marginal access to social resources and human rights. It seems that the alienated humanity which prostituted women experience are exacerbated by the criminalisation of sex work, as 'normality' is intimately bound to the function of law (Mills, 2015). Literature argues that the characterisation of prostituted women as abnormal is born from a Judeo-Christian and neoconservative ontology (Mathieson et al., 2016). In light of authors who argue that the criminalisation of sex work is a political project that seeks to consolidate a particular national identity (Scoular & O'Neill, 2007), it is curious how these colonial histories presently manifest

within South Africa's post-apartheid social landscape (Modiri, 2017). These findings emphasise literature which argues that South Africa's liberal democracy maintains implicit power structures of race, class and gender inequality (Meer, 1990).

These findings illustrate that the intersectional social identity of black prostituted women cannot be separated from the biopolitical processes that organise them into an economy of power. The combination of biopolitics and intersectionality provided a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand the identities embedded within the texts. This was a helpful framework to examine the interplay between the constructions of identity categories for black prostituted women.

Strengths, limitations and directions for future research

This study provided a unique theoretical framework that had not previously been used to explore the possible textually represented identities of prostituted women in South Africa. An insightful analysis was conducted on the manner in which the bodies of black prostituted women are politicised and organised into an intersectional economy of power. The analysis highlighted historical forces of oppression that presently impact the lives of the black prostituted women within the texts. This study engaged with a temporal facet of social identity, as it is located along a historical trajectory. The theoretical and methodological circumference of this study provides potentially useful implications for future studies on the analysis of identity within South Africa. The socio-cognitive model of critical discourse studies enables an exploration of the manner in which power structures manifest within the discourse (van Dijk, 2009). This study is located in literature that seeks to emphasise the voices of those who have been disenfranchised by institutionalised forces. It is a counter-conceptualisation of discourses that are organised within heteropatriarchy and whiteness.

However, this study, admittedly, does not provide an understanding of all black prostituted women in South Africa. This provides the study with some potential limitations, as the findings cannot be generalised to others within this population. Moreover, the identities of the black prostituted women represented by the texts are impacted by the goals of the organisation. The objects of analysis were retrieved from an organisation which advocates for the rights of prostituted women (Tshelane, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). Therefore, the analysis focussed on identities that are organised within a social movement, which calls for the decriminalisation of prostitution. It is recommended that future qualitative research on this topic use alternative methods to retrieve data to explore potential alternative identity constructions of black prostituted women. Another potential direction for future research may be exploring non-heteronormative identities within the sex trade industry, such as Samudzi and Manell (2015). This may be a promising direction for future research as literature indicates that non-heteronormative identities are often marginalised (Canham, 2017). It may be fruitful for future studies to locate non-heteronormative identities within the scope of biopolitical theory.

The study found that black women from the working class may be positioned in conditions that foster their entry into precarious labour. However, it was not within the scope of the study to develop a more expansive understanding thereof. It may be useful for future studies to explore social identity and participation in different forms of precarious labour outside the domain of sex work.

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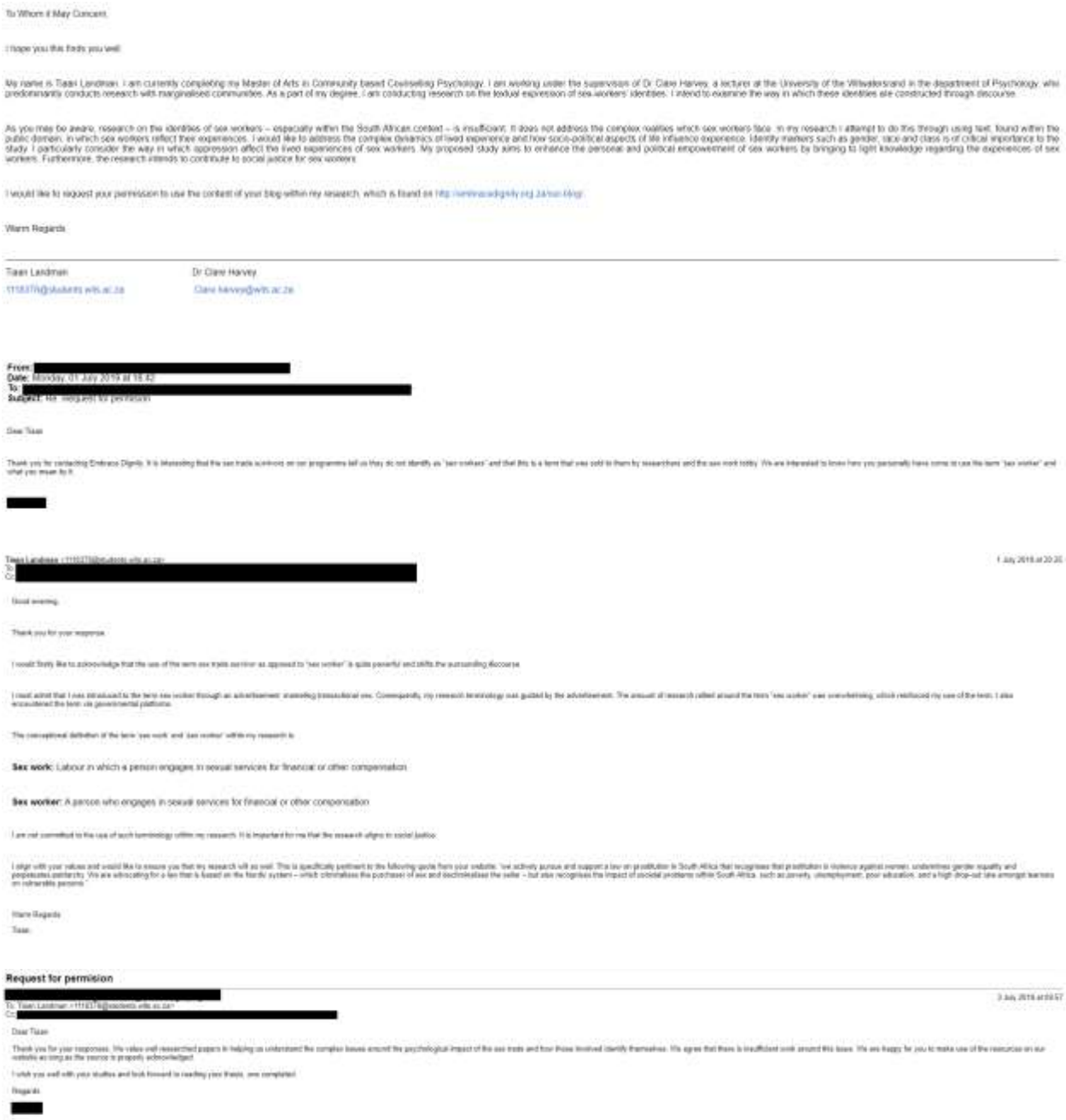
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Appendix A[27]



To Whom it May Concern

I hope you this finds you well

My name is Tiaan Landman. I am currently completing my Master of Arts in Community based Counselling Psychology. I am working under the supervision of Dr Clare Harvey, a lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand in the department of Psychology, who predominantly conducts research with marginalised communities. As a part of my degree, I am conducting research on the textual expression of sex workers' identities. I intend to examine the way in which these identities are constructed through discourse.

As you may be aware, research on the identities of sex workers – especially within the South African context – is insufficient. It does not address the complex realities which sex workers face. In my research I attempt to do this through using text, found within the public domain, in which sex workers reflect their experiences. I would like to address the complex dynamics of lived experience and how socio-political aspects of life influence experience. Identity markers such as gender, race and class is of critical importance to the study. I particularly consider the way in which oppression affect the lived experiences of sex workers. My proposed study aims to enhance the personal and political empowerment of sex workers by bringing to light knowledge regarding the experiences of sex workers. Furthermore, the research intends to contribute to social justice for sex workers.

I would like to request your permission to use the content of your blog within my research, which is found on http://embracedignity.org.za/our-blog/.

Warm Regards

Tiaan Landman
1118378@students.wits.ac.za

Dr Clare Harvey
Clare.Harvey@wits.ac.za

From: [redacted]
Date: Monday, 01 July 2019 at 18:42
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: request for permission

Dear Tiaan

Thank you for contacting Embrace Dignity. It is interesting that the sex trade survivors on our programme tell us they do not identify as "sex workers" and that this is a term that was sold to them by researchers and the sex work lobby. We are interested to know how you personally have come to use the term "sex worker" and what you mean by it.

[redacted]

Tiaan Landman <1118378@students.wits.ac.za>
Cc: [redacted]

1 July 2019 at 20:20

Good evening,

Thank you for your response.

I would firstly like to acknowledge that the use of the term sex trade survivor as opposed to "sex worker" is quite powerful and shifts the surrounding discourse.

I must admit that I was introduced to the term sex worker through an advertisement promoting transactional sex. Consequently, my research terminology was guided by the advertisement. The amount of research called around the term "sex worker" was overwhelming, which reinforced my use of the term. I also encountered the term via governmental platforms.

The conceptional definition of the term 'sex work' and 'sex worker' within my research is:

Sex work: Labour in which a person engages in sexual services for financial or other compensation

Sex worker: A person who engages in sexual services for financial or other compensation

I am not committed to the use of such terminology within my research. It is important for me that the research aligns to social justice.

I align with your values and would like to ensure you that my research will as well. This is specifically pertinent to the following quote from your website, 'we actively pursue and support a law on prostitution in South Africa that recognises that prostitution is violence against women, undermines gender equality and perpetuates patriarchy. We are advocating for a law that is based on the Nordic system – which criminalises the purchase of sex and decriminalises the seller – but also recognises the impact of societal problems within South Africa, such as poverty, unemployment, poor education, and a high drop-out rate amongst learners on vulnerable persons.'

Warm Regards
Tiaan

Request for permision

[redacted]
To: Tiaan Landman <1118378@students.wits.ac.za>
Cc: [redacted]

3 July 2019 at 09:57

Dear Tiaan

Thank you for your responses. We value well researched papers in helping us understand the complex issues around the psychological impact of the sex trade and how those involved identify themselves. We agree that there is insufficient work around this issue. We are happy for you to make use of the resources on our website as long as the source is properly acknowledged.

I wish you well with your studies and look forward to reading your thesis, once completed.

Regards

[redacted]

[27] All identifying information of those who have been contacted was redacted, to maintain anonymity.