

An investigation into South Africans performing online erotic labour, experiences of their labour and their experiences and negotiations of stigmatisation.



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## Abstract

The lived experiences of online erotic labourers, in South Africa, is investigated in this dissertation. To investigate the experiences of digital labour and stigma, five South Africans who have performed erotic labour participated in semi-structured interviews. A qualitative research design, grounded in critical theory, was used to develop a rich understanding of online erotic labour. Sex work and erotic labour has been conceptualised through a sex work inclusionary feminist academic lens and analysis was done using reflexive thematic analysis technique. Findings revealed that experiences of erotic labour are significantly influenced by the type of digital platform used to sell labour. These experiences were found to be located within the broader context of platform mediated gig work, and I investigated how platform capitalism affects workers' experiences of precarity. Congruent with other non-stigmatised gig workers, findings show that performing online erotic labour is subject to general forms of income insecurity and economic liability. However, the stigmatised nature of erotic labour creates a unique kind of precarity that is not endemic to all forms of platform mediated gig work. The findings detail how this stigma is navigated and how my participants create positive meanings in their lives related to their erotic labour.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Sex work has been contentiously debated and theorised within the discipline of feminist studies. This research is concerned with understanding online erotic labour through the lens of Sex Work Inclusionary Feminism, from the perspective of online erotic labourers in South Africa across various online platforms. Exploring the experiences of online erotic labourers in this way, locates this research at the nexus of feminist literature on sex work and the wider context of platform-mediated gig work. This research investigates how platform capitalism affects workers' experiences of precarity, from the perspective of online erotic labour and stigmatisation. To investigate the experiences of digital labour and stigma, five South Africans who have performed online erotic labour participated in semi-structured interviews. A qualitative research design, grounded in critical theory, was used to develop a rich understanding of online erotic labour. The data generated from the interviews was analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis technique. The findings revealed that experiences of erotic labour are significantly influenced by the type of erotic labour being performed and the digital platforms that facilitate the labour.

Grounded in the three fundamental tenants of sex work inclusionary feminism, this study takes is aligned with the notions that 1) people can freely choose to enter into sex work, 2) sex work is a legitimate form of labour, and 3) sex workers deserve equal labour rights and legal protection on par with other forms of work (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Sonke Gender Justice, 2014). It also recognises the nuance both within the broader industry of sexual commerce and within sex workers' individual situated realities. The SWIF framework simultaneously respects and acknowledges the agency of individuals within these broader socioeconomic contexts. In addition, through the application of sex work inclusionary feminism as a theoretical frame for this research into online erotic labour in the contemporary contexts of platform-mediated gig work is engaged with. Platform-mediated gig work refers to a system in which digital platforms facilitate workers to sell their labour either directly to consumers or to perform ad-hoc labour for a platform. It is well evidenced that platform-based gig workers experience specific kinds of labour precarity as a result of their dependency on online platforms to facilitate their labour. However, the stigmatised nature of erotic labour creates a unique kind of precarity only experienced by erotic labourers.

This research aims to contribute to gaps in feminist and gig work literature globally and even more so from a global South perspective in the African context. The existing research about sex work and erotic labour in South Africa has focused predominantly on full-service contact, street or brothel-based sex workers. Due to this the South African academic institution has not

yet built a rich understanding of the experiences and unique challenges that are faced by people who perform online erotic labour. It is in this gap that this research is located within, and aims to broaden the scope of how sex work is researched, understood and conceptualised at an academic, advocacy and legislative perspective.

The legislation regulating sexual commerce in South Africa is also somewhat unclear for non-contact sex worker/erotic labourers. Within South Africa contact full-service sex work is legislated under the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act of 1957 and 2007; these laws completely criminalise the selling and buying of sexual services, related activities such as soliciting and brothel keeping are also criminal offences. The law is very clear on conceptualising all full-service contact sex work as a criminal offence that requires state intervention. However online sex work exists within a legal grey area. The Film and Publications Act of 1996 criminalises publishing sexually explicit material on websites hosted in South Africa, whereas sexually explicit content produced in South Africa but hosted on international websites is not criminalised. Although people in South Africa performing erotic labour online are not explicitly criminalised, they exist in a society that stigmatises all erotic labour (Voss, 2015). It is within this stigmatisation that this research is investigating.

## Sex work vs Erotic labour

In attempting to define this research it is important to define the key terminology this research will use. This research understands sex work as "...the exchange of sexual services or performances, for material compensation." (Weitzer, 2022:3). It can be divided into two typologies: contact, where the worker comes into direct contact with their client such as brothel worker and strippers, and non-contact, where the worker is separated from their clients such as webcamming and pornography (Weitzer, 2022:3). The distinction between these typologies is often porous, and many workers will perform both contact and non-contact sex work (Weitzer, 2023:3). This definition of sex work is purposively loose which means it can be hard to determine if a behaviour can be categorised as sex work. Often the distinctions people draw can be traced back to ideas of high and low art, for instance posing nude can either be interpreted as art or pornography depending on where the images that are created are deemed tasteful (Williams, 1989:6). Consequently it is difficult to definitively say whether a piece of media is actually pornography, this research is using the broadest definition of pornography possible.

This research initially set out using the terminology of online sex work/sex worker as is in line with the Sex Work Inclusionary Feminist politics of this research but as the research progressed

this was not the best suit way to conceptualise the participants and their labour. I have settled on the terminology of erotic labour and erotic labourer. It is difficult to describe precisely what online erotic labour is because of the diversity in the types work people perform. The way this study will understand online erotic labour as the exchange of services with the explicit intention of generating a sexual response from a client facilitate by the internet for material gain. Some erotic labour is immediately understood to be sex work such as pornography work and erotic webcam shows, while others, such as erotic chat hosting, might not be. This research uses the term erotic labour, not in an attempt to categorise some sexual commerce as more ‘acceptable’, but rather to capture a broad range of labour that might otherwise not be considered as strictly sex work. It has also been chosen in an attempt to more fully capture the non-erotic labour that goes in generating an income from online sexual commerce.

## Chapter outline

Chapter 2 will introduce the theoretical framework this research employs to theorise sex work, erotic labour and agency. Chapter 2 will open the literature review by providing an overview and critical reflection on of the Sex Work Inclusionary Feminist politics that informed this research. Chapter 2 provides a review of the academic literature related to online erotic that created the foundation knowledge used to create this research. The literature will allow this research locate itself in broader scholarship on sex work and erotic labour. The review of literature in Chapter 2 will explore the gaps in existing literature on online erotic labour that this research will fill. Chapter 3 will open by locating this research within the critical theory paradigm, this chapter will then outline and justify the research methods this research employed to gather and analyse the data this research is premised on. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the process this research took from sampling participants to the ethical practices that were applied. Chapter 4 will present and analyse the findings of this research. This chapter will begin by providing a biographical profile of each participant and the platforms they used to facilitate their online erotic labour. The findings and analysis explore the themes of ‘Experience of Labour’ ‘Platform-mediate Precarity’ and ‘Experiences of Stigma’ generated from the participants experiences. Chapter 5 will conclude this research.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

This research is particularly concerned with understanding online erotic labour through the lens of sex work inclusionary feminism paradigm, as experienced by online erotic labourers in South Africa across various online platforms. This research was conducted using a sex work inclusionary feminist paradigm for understanding sex work. This literature review aims to speak to the above areas of study, which covers a broad range of topics due to the significant gap in the literature which attends to platform mediated online erotic labour and even more so from the perspective of those who perform such labour. This literature review starts by reflecting on sex work inclusionary feminist paradigm and contrasting it to abolitionist feminist theorisation. Expanding the scope of sex work literature, I then provide a review of the immorality paradigm which is most often upheld in dominant discourse around sex work more generally and has served as a basis in which legislative practices have been conceptualised. Following this, I localise my study of platform mediated online erotic labour by providing an account of existing research about online erotic labour. The final section of the literature begins to carefully weave together literature on online erotic labour and platform mediated gig work, a collaborative of literature which is significantly under-studied, misunderstood and increasingly important given the incline of technological infrastructure in our daily lives.

### Sex Work Inclusionary Feminism

Sex work has long been heavily contested with the academic discipline of feminist studies. A particular approach to understanding and conceptualising sex work which has risen in prominence within the field is Sex Work Inclusionary Feminism (SWIF) (Huschke & Coetzee, 2019; Scourgie et al., 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2020; Sonke Gender Justice, 2014). This dissertation is particularly interested in feminist studies whilst forwarding SWIF as a lens in which to critically engage with online erotic labour, as experienced by those who have performed erotic labour in South Africa. Sex work inclusionary feminism is the paradigm this research will use to critically engage with existing research about contact and non-contact sex work. Exploring online erotic labour through the lens of SWIF will reveal experiences of labour, while locating this work within the wider context of platform-mediated precarity which I explore further in the following chapter. In this way, the dissertation will reveal how the online erotic labourers experience their work and navigate the subsequent stigmatisation of erotic labour.

Although this research focuses on the academic strand of sex work inclusionary feminism it is important to recognise the tangible activism work carried out by sex workers. These politics

have existed amongst sex workers far before the formal academic movement came to fruition. Sex worker mutual aid has long preceded the formal creation of sex workers rights organisations. For instance Kenyan sex workers in Nairobi in the 1970s would perform mutual aid paying each other's fines and appointing each other to mutually inherit individual property (Mgbako, 2016:92). The academic field of sex work inclusionary feminism is the direct result of activism carried out by sex workers. South Africa is home to one of the most preeminent sex workers rights movements, organisations such as SWEAT and Sisonke actively organise in aid of sex workers rights. They have a twofold approach performing policy and advocacy work fighting for the legislative reform and decriminalisation as well as community outreach providing health-care and legal aid to sex workers (Mgbako, 2016). SWEAT and Sisonke are both sex-worker lead organisations focusing on the material needs of fellow workers (Mgbako, 2016:87). Within the South African context sex work inclusionary feminist research has gone hand in hand with activist work.

The strength of SWIF as a paradigm for understanding sex work lies within its comprehensive nature. SWIF recognizes that sex workers experience incidences of violence at alarmingly high rates (Huschke & Coetzee, 2019). The experiences of contact sex workers in South Africa frequently features violence from clients #SAYHERNAME demonstrates how contact sex workers frequently risk physical and sexual at time resulting in murder (Vidima, Tenga & Richter, 2020). During the study period of 2018 to 2019 48.5% of sex work deaths were attributable to non-natural causes (Vidima, Tenga & Richter, 2020). Contact sex workers are often dehumanised by clients, their family and communities where they are treated as being sub-human (Huschke & Coetzee, 2019). However these circumstances are exacerbated by the continuing criminalisation, “Much of this is linked to the violence that accompanies sex work and the twin contexts of patriarchy and criminalisation...” (Scourgie et al., 2013:6). It is the interaction between criminalisation and stigmatisation that intensify violence as they perpetually dehumanise sex workers (Huschke & Coetzee, 2019:7). In order to reduce violence against sex workers, SWIF adopts a two-pronged approach of decriminalisation and destigmatisation of sex work. The decriminalisation model removes all criminal legislation of the selling of sexual services and any related activities such as brothel-keeping (Marshall, 2016). Destigmatisation is a social project that aims to change the public perception of sex workers and the sex industry to reflect the wide and nuanced nature of sex work. Destigmatisation is a slow and difficult project that will engage with the process of humanising sex workers and emphasising that decriminalisation is primarily concerned with safety. “In order to improve prostitution, we must improve our attitudes toward it.” (Ericsson, 1980:366).

Abolitionist feminists' theorists<sup>1</sup> are correct that most people's entry into the sex industry is often necessitated by poverty or because of a lack of alternative economic opportunities. For many gender-divergent people, sex work was not just one of avenue of income - it was the only one (Sable, 2020). As Korteweg (2008:43) theorises that individual agency is embedded within specific contexts; individuals are continuously "...embedded in intersecting social forces of domination and subordination...". Individuals do not occupy static positions of oppressed or resistant – agency is fluid, including in contexts where they live within oppressive systems. People are not passive observers of the world; they conscientiously act on their world which in turn changes it, even when they do not possess hegemonic power (Korteweg, 2008). Individual agency is always present and should not be disregarded because of their hegemonic position. Narratives about sex workers and erotic labourers, including in some feminist research, widely conceptualise people performing erotic labour as being completely devoid of agency. Historically, feminist research understood erotic labour as something exclusively women were forced into either directly through force or indirectly through structural factors such as poverty. Therefore, they can never exercise any agency (Barry, 1979, 1995; Dworkin, 1981, 1993; Jeffreys, 1997, 2009). By using embedded agency, this research is able to balance how even within situations of constraint, individuals can exercise agency.

The decision to engage in sex work is often facilitated through individual negotiation of intersecting socioeconomic factors as all non-stigmatised workers do (Agustín, 2005). This is empirically reflected in the English Collective of Prostitutes (2019) comparative survey of women in who engaged in sex work and other non-criminalised 'women's' work, such as cleaning, and found very little difference in the material working conditions of each worker. The major finding was that criminalisation and stigmatisation made the jobs of sex workers more dangerous and left them vulnerable to exploitation, rather than the actual material nature of sex work (ECP, 2019). This gets to the heart of what makes sex work dangerous; namely, stigmatisation. Sex work stigma, the "...hatred, fear and dehumanisation of sex workers.", is manifested through the acceptance of violence towards sex workers and the continuation of the criminalisation of sex work (Mgbako, 2020:94). Although sex workers are stigmatised at a structural level, individual experiences of stigmatisation are not monolithic. The nuanced nature of stigmatisation can best be understood using feminist economic theory the society of constraint (Folbre, 1994). Individuals can only exercise individual agency within the wider structures that determine their position in the social hierarchy (Bettio, Giusta & Di Tommaso, 2017:9). Using the theory of the society of constraint agency and stigma exist in degrees, in relation to intersectional identity factors. Stigma and the negotiation thereof is frequently

understood through a neoliberal lens as being individualized in nature and caused by specific experiences of interpersonal interactions (Goffman, 1963). If stigma is reduced to a matter of interpersonal conflict, it depoliticises the inherently political nature of living under conditions of stigmatisation and impedes changing structures that reproduce stigmatisation.

The Sex Work Inclusionary Feminist theoretical framework this research is using to conceptualise sex work broadly will be extended to specifically conceptualise erotic content. This chapter will provide this research's foundational understanding that will be used later to critically engage with studies about erotic content and as the basis of knowledge that informed the focus of this research. The SWIF theoretical framework is able to more comprehensively engage with the nuances in the experiences of sex workers creating erotic content as it centres their experiences as opposed to the experiences of the consumers of erotic content.

## Sex Work Inclusionary Feminist theorisation of erotic content

The foundational literature of feminist conceptualisation of erotic content is located within second-wave feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s, specifically in the United States. At the time this conceptual framework was created, erotic content created by non-contact sex worker was mostly limited to pornography. This debate was equally dichotomised with some advocating for its abolition while others advocated for making more of it. As this research project is specifically related to online erotic content, previous feminist writings on pornography more generally will be used to form a foundational understanding of how erotic content is understood.

When examining notions of the erotic through a Black feminist lens the erotic can be understood to be a type of gendered power (Lorde, 1978). The power of the erotic is often maligned within Euro-Western culture, that can be seen within the immorality paradigm of understanding sex work. Although Lorde was highly critical of pornography the conceptualisation of the erotic can be seen within contemporary African feminist theorisations of the erotic as entangled of activism of embodied performance (Kisubi Mbasalaki & Matchett, 2020:9). This research aims to use the theorisation of embodied entanglement to demonstrate the interconnectedness of sex work inclusionary feminism praxis with feminist theorisations of erotic labour. Echoing its stance on contact sex work SWIF argues that individuals can consensually perform within pornography, those people engaged in labour in the pornography industry either starting in the media or as production crew deserve the same labour rights as other workers. Opposition to abolitionist feminist or family values advocacy to criminalise pornography is often framed under freedom of speech arguments, to criminalise pornography

is to limit expression. That to censor pornography and criminalise the producing and consuming of it would infringe on individual freedom of expression (Williams, 1986). This argument is immaterial to the politics of this research, the SWIF theoretical framework unreservedly advocates for whatever approach is most beneficial for the rights of sex workers. Sex work inclusionary feminism as a framework is again useful to understand erotic content because of its comprehensiveness. Pornography as an industry is rife with both sexism and misogyny, but workers deserve legal protection and respect which SWIF affirms (Mac & Smith, 2020). What quality literature that does exist on the topic comes from sex worker advocacy groups. Generally these SWIF feminist groups take the same position on pornography as contact sex work, a labour and human rights-based approach. The Adult Performer Advocacy Committee (APAC) in their Performer Bill of Rights sets out a clear set of guidelines for erotic content creators of best practices for before, during and after shoots (The Adult Performer Advocacy Committee, 2022). These guidelines are congruent with the best practice guidelines within other non-stigmatised industries. The stigma that harms sex workers is frequently reinforced by the feminist movement.

An integral element of abolitionist feminist discourse is to make no distinction between pornography made by willing participants and unlawful non-consensual sexual content. From this perspective, all erotic content is equally violent because pornography is intrinsically violent. Dworkin's (1993) analogy of sex work being gang rape is emblematic of this; because she argues sex workers can never consensually engage in a sexual exchange for money, it is therefore always rape. "The gang rape is punctuated by a money exchange. That's all. That's the only difference." (Dworkin, 1993:3). What this argument does is not advocate for sex workers who experience violence but legitimatises and justifies the violence they face. If all sex work is violence, then there is no distinction between a violent and non-violent encounter between a sex worker and their client. By categorising all sex between a sex worker and client as rape, then actual instances of rape are indiscernible, echoing the misogynistic rape myths that abolitionist feminist supposedly fight against. In Miller & Schwartz's (1995) study on sexual violence faced by street-based sex workers in the USA, there was a persistent belief that sex workers are 'unrapeable' because of the same belief that violence is a natural part of sex work. The anti-sex work stigma present in the abolitionist drive to save sex workers, is identical to that present in misogynistic rape myths of those who are violent to sex workers. When an American pornographic performer was accused of sexual violence by multiple female pornography workers, it was the victims who were stigmatised (Gibson, 2015). The general response ranged from indifference to the violence, to understanding the violence as either a

punishment or just part of the job (Gibson, 2015). The abolitionist perspective reinforces this understanding through continuing to stigmatise sex work which tangibly results in sex workers experiencing violence. That is why this research will be conducted from an explicitly sex work inclusionary feminist perspective.

## Abolitionist feminism

The SWIF paradigm stands in contrast to the other dominant feminist theoretical framework for conceptualising sex work, namely abolitionist feminism. Although this framing will not be implemented in this research and its core assertions have been fundamentally debunked in the previous section, it is still important to understand and engage with this school of thought. As in is influential both in a social and legal context especially in the discipline of feminist academia. The core assertion of sex work abolitionist feminism is that sex work is an act of violence and that no one can ever consensually decide to engage in sex work (Barry, 1979, 1995; Dworkin, 1981, 1985, 1993; Jeffreys, 1997, 2009). Abolitionists theorise that because of the inherently patriarchal structure of society in which women are not equal to men, they are forced into sex work because they do not have economic alternatives (Sloan & Wahab, 2000:461). Abolitionists point to the high rates of domestic violence, women's historical exclusion from the economy and women's cultural subordination to men as being factors that force women into sex work (Sloan & Wahab, 2000:462). It is on this basis that abolitionists assert sex work can never be consensual. Domination theory forms the conceptual framework of abolitionist thought, which asserts that society is built around male domination over women through their sexuality; "The male, through each and every one of his institutions, forces the female to conform to his supremely ridiculous definition of her as a sexual object." (Dworkin, 1981:22). Abolitionists view the sex industry as exploitative because of what they perceive as sex work's "...intrinsically violent..." nature (Dworkin, 1993). Abolitionist movements asserted that only women can be sex workers because as mentioned above they are the only people sufficiently disenfranchised by patriarchal society (Dworkin, 1993). Within an abolitionist framework, sex workers have no agency and are victims of the sex industry, who require outsiders to intervene and rescue them. Therefore, the primary purpose of all abolitionist feminist research and activism is legal and political reform towards achieving sex work abolition usually through the implementation of carceral measures.

Internationally, including South Africa, the predominant legislative model for contact sex work is full criminalisation. Under the full criminalisation model, both the person exchanging sex for material reward and the person providing that reward are criminalised, activities associated

with sex work such as soliciting clients and advertising services are also criminal offences (Marshall, 2016). Under full-criminalisation, third-parties such as brothel managers that facilitate sexual commerce are also criminalised (Marshall, 2016). In theory, full criminalisation holds both the seller and the buyer equally responsible. However, in practice, sex workers are disproportionately targeted by criminalisation laws (Grant, 2014). The aim of the abolitionist feminist model is not to legislate sex work in the short term but to take action to completely eliminate it in the long term. They propose the end-demand model to achieve this. The end-demand model (also known as the Nordic, partial-criminalisation/client criminalisation model) criminalises those purchasing sexual services while decriminalising those selling sexual service, and third-parties remain criminalised under this model (Marshall, 2016). Central to the end-demand model is the provision of welfare services for sex workers to exit the industry (Langford & Skilbrei, 2021:175). This is to make it harder for potential buyers to purchase sex without punishing those who sell it because of the perceived desperation and vulnerability that would lead them to become sex workers (Mathieson, Branam & Noble, 2015). The end-demand model has a strong emphasis on providing exit services such as skills training and housing benefits to help sex workers leave the industry (Marshall, 2016). Proponents of this model claim that sex workers will leave the industry more easily and earlier because of access to exit services, and as fewer people take part in the sex industry, people will consider it socially and morally unacceptable to buy sex, in turn making sex workers safer because they have enshrined access to legal protection (Mathieson, Branam & Noble, 2015). However laudable the claims made by the end-demand model are, they are not feasible nor based on any evidence. As of this point no society has ever been successful in completely eliminating sex work. Apologists of the end-demand model claim even if the model is not successful in completely eliminating sex work, at a minimum it improves their conditions. However, the end-model, in addition to being wholly unsuccessful in achieving its goal, actively harms and perpetuates violence against sex workers.

Sweden ratified end-demand legislation in 1999 following a large-scale abolitionist feminist campaign in the name of “women’s peace” (Langford & Skilbrei, 2021:174). Subsequently studies announcing the success of this model claimed that the total sex worker population had significantly decreased (Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, 2007). However, these findings were based on severely flawed methodology (Marshall, 2016). What actually happened in Sweden, is the amount of sex workers visibly engaging in street-based sex work decreased for a while, not because they left the industry but rather because clients risking prosecution no longer felt comfortable soliciting in public (Skarhed, 2010). Furthermore, there

is no evidence that implementing the end-demand model in any context has ever decreased the amount of people engaged in sex work (Jordan, 2012:7; Marshall, 2016:61; McBride, et al., 2020; Vanwesenbeeck, 2017; Crago, et al., 2020). When clients want to avoid the risk of prosecution, sex workers are forced to operate in more clandestine markets to protect clients. Sex workers have less agency while operating in hidden economies, because their ability to vet clients is diminished. This means they only have split-seconds to make judgements about the work they take (Bettio, Giusta & Di Tommaso, 2017). Following Canada's adoption of this model, sex workers experienced an increase in violence and their ability to engage police for protection reduced (Crago, et al., 2020). Their interactions with the police became more antagonistic and sex workers with marginalised identities became targets of harassment (Crago et al., 2020). This is due to an increase in stigmatisation; the police believed that because sex workers were now able to more easily exit the industry, those who did not must be especially deviant (Crago et al., 2020). Although this law is based on an abolitionist framework that does not want to punish sex workers because they are '...victimized prostituted woman...' public perception of sex workers does not reflect this notion (Jordan, 2012:9). The general perception of sex workers is not as victims, but rather as morally deviant and deserving of punishment (Jordan, 2012:9). This is because the abolitionist narrative about sex workers does nothing to combat sex work stigma that causes violence because it continues to draw moral geographies about 'good non-sex workers' and 'bad sex workers'. Where abolitionist narratives do seep into the public consciousness positioning sex workers as "... as simple objects of pity..." rendering them as incapable of meaningful consent and self-determination (Mgbako, 2016:23).

## Abolitionist Feminist research on pornography

Preeminent abolitionist feminist scholar Dworkin (1984:1) conceives of pornography as "...the graphic depiction of whores...". Abolitionist feminist thought on pornography is consistent with their perspective on contact sex work, the pornography industry is fundamentally exploitative and violent towards the women within it and encourages violence against women universally. Abolitionist feminists rely heavily on the use of abject horror in their arguments about the nature of pornography, what is not done is providing concrete evidence of their arguments. This use of the abject creates a socially abject subject, a subject who is so downcast and degraded they are therefore subhuman. (Tyler, 2013). The seminal abolitionist text "Pornography: Men Possessing Women" (1984) Dworkin describes pornography in the most emotive and dehumanising way imaginable. Throughout the book there is a compulsive focus on the visceral elements of pornography such as genitals, semen, blood and vomit to produce a sense of disgust in the reader about the nature of pornography. In the chapter 6 "Pornography"

Dworkin makes the argument that choosing to work in pornography makes a woman subhuman. “The whore is porne, the lowest whore, the whore who belongs to all male citizens: the slut, the cunt.” (Dworkin, 1984:202). This is not the perspective of an individual who advocates for women to be free from violence, this is pure dehumanisation seeking only to expel sex workers from society. The disgust that has been created is a tool often used by abolitionist to oppose sex work creating a sense of disgust and shame in the audience who will go onto have a us the clean non-sex worker and them the dirty deviant sex worker (Sauer, 2019). This framing only reinforces the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy without changing any existing oppressive structures. As Weitzer (2006) noted abolitionist movements rely almost exclusively on anecdotes of violence without ever engaging in the nuance related to sex work. The proliferation of degrading and dehumanising language about sex workers in feminist discourse contributes to further violence against the community.

## Immorality paradigm

The above section outlined the dominant feminist theoretical frameworks for understanding sex work, however these theoretical frameworks are not proportionally reflected within wider society. To only explore feminist conceptualisation of sex work would neglect the perspective that is the most materially influential to sex workers experiences. As reflected in opinion polls, religion, the media, politics, and ordinary discourse sex work is conceptualised through the immorality paradigm (Weitzer, 2023:27). The immoral paradigm considers all sex work (both contact and non-contact) as being inherently immoral. The above section interrogated the evidential claims and philosophical underpinning of abolitionist feminism and SWIF but that is much harder to do with the immorality paradigm as it makes very few. Some try to justify the paradigm’s perspective by supposing that sexual commerce threatens the overall moral fiber of society or weakens the institutions of heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family despite the fact that there is no support for any of these claims. The existence of the immorality paradigm of sex work within Africa is located within settler colonialism (Kisubi Mbasalaki & Matchett, 2020:10). Sex work legislation during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century twins the legislation in colonialist nations (van Onselen, 1982). Within the African context the role of the sex worker is highly gendered where sex workers are automatically thought to be women. This gendering reinforces existing colonial patriarchal conceptualisation of women being diminished through sex. Reinforcing the conceptualisation of the ‘fallen women’ or the ‘whore’ contrasting that of the ‘masculine man’ (Tamale, 2011:155). The immorality paradigm understands sex work to be immoral because they feel or sense that it is immoral (Ericsson, 1980:338).

## Research about online erotic labour

The body of research that exists about erotic content is dominated by laboratory experiments observing the effects of consuming erotic content (Prause, 2019; Miller, McBain & Raggatt, 2019; McNair, 2014; Shor, 2022), content analysis studies of erotic content (Scott & Cuvelier, 1987; Shor & Seida, 2019; 2021; Scott & Cuvelier, 1993) and surveys about people's consumption habits (Burtäverde et al., 2021; Egan & Parmar, 2013). Although these types of studies can be valuable, they are not relevant to the aim of this study, which is centring the experiences of people performing erotic labour rather than the experiences of those who consume it. There is also a significant gap in the literature about the experiences of people performing other kinds of online erotic labour such as chat hosting. The hypervisibility of the consumer of erotic content instead of the workers who labour in the industry is indicative of a fundamental lack of understanding of a type of labour that is often speculated about. A major limitation of this research is that it is very western-centric, more specifically American centric, and I have tried to include scholarship from the global South where possible. Erotic content will be understood in this research project to be a broad category that refers to a piece of media such as images, videos or webcam performances of a sexual nature that are consensually created with the primary intention of garnering a sexual response in the audience. Online erotic content which includes pornography, webcamming and sexual imagery and performances that has been consensually distributed with the intention of generating a profit.

The field of online erotic labour is one of rapid change and consistent new developments. Feminist research on non-contact erotic labour is somewhat outdated. Prior to the proliferation of ICT technology, erotic content was limited to that produced through a formal system of studios and magazines, controlled by a few companies with a more defined pool of regular workers; this period roughly spanned the mid-1970s until mid-2000s (Berg, 2021:11). Although pornographic media was created all over the world the leading producer was the United States (Berg, 2021:11). Erotic content largely consisted of pornographic films and magazines material ranging from softcore nudity to hardcore pornography created by formal production companies, the way erotic content was produced was comparable to that of all other media. Creating and distributing visual media both erotic and otherwise on a large enough scale to generate a profit was extremely costly, meaning that the industry was dominated by the owners of the production studios (Berg, 2021:12). The owners of these studios largely dictated what kind of content was created and which workers were employed to feature in it (Berg, 2021:12). The workers who were mostly commonly employed in the studio system were

homogeneous, often workers of colour, diverse gender expression or those who did not meet Eurocentric beauty standards were discriminated against in hiring and frequently paid less than other workers, although this practice was somewhat disrupted structural discrimination endures (Berg, 2021:59; Jones, 2015). The studio system was fundamentally altered in the digital era, widespread technological access democratised the production and distribution of this content. People could now self-produce content using their own filming equipment and post it online themselves onto websites for erotic content (Easterbrook-Smith, 2022). These technology developments also allowed new kinds of online erotic labour to develop, clients could purchase erotic performances filmed using the workers computer's webcam or log into erotic chatrooms and exchange messages virtually (Weitzer, 2023; Nagy, 2021). The internet has facilitated the growth of the non-contact sector of sex work and erotic labour. It is in this technological moment that the participants' experiences of online erotic labour are located. The results of this democratisation are mixed: the labour pool became much larger, resulting in increased competition amongst erotic content creators whilst giving people who were previously excluded access and allowing workers to work directly for themselves (Berg, 2021; Easterbrook-Smith, 2022).

On an economic level the increasingly diffused and platform-mediated nature of online erotic content creation has created experiences that are in line with broader trends in the gig economy (Marceta, 2021). Romanian women's experiences of webcamming developed the concept of 'flexi(nse)curity,' the tension between the labour they provide and their lack of security (Vlase & Preoteasa, 2021). The amount and intensity of labour they performed remained somewhat consistent but the income varied wildly on a regular basis (Vlase & Preoteasa, 2021). Writing in the British context Bowen (2021:40) echoes this sentiment by classifying the sex industry as a 'dual-labour', finding that engagement in the sex industry was usually a way to supplement income from other 'formal' work. Workers previously employed by the 'centralised industry' experience increasing precarity, they have to have several revenue streams in order to make an income (Bowen, 2021:41). Moving into the Global South, in the Philippines workers webcamming can potentially earn a lucrative income, most of the platform's workers sell their content on are geared towards a Global North client-based resulting in a very favourable exchange rate (Matthews, 2017). The job market in the Philippines (similarly to South Africa) is pervaded with widespread unemployment and job scarcity resulting in extreme levels of poverty, this type of work can tangibly improve the workers quality of life (Matthews, 2017). For the Filipino webcam-operates their engagement in online erotic labour served as an

intermittent form of transitional labour that they use to meet their immediate needs while searching for other more permanent forms of work (Matthews, 2017).

When conceptualising online sexual labour, content creation is the most visible sector but there are other forms of less visible internet sexual labour that often go overlooked. There is a substantial gap in research into the erotic labour of chatroom hosts. Nagy (2021) explores how emergent digital technologies in France during the 1980s and 1990s created an environment where a largely male staff of professional chat hosts engaged in ‘shadow’ erotic labour. The increasing availability of home computers meant that consumers were able to become erotically connected to what they thought were other customers on online chatrooms, these chatrooms were staffed with mostly young men pretending to be women performing paid labour to reply to client messages as chat hosts (Nagy, 2021:64). Chat hosting was classified as a ‘keyboard job’, a kind of labour that would be considered platform-based gig work. This type of online erotic labour is frequently overlooked when compared to the more visible labour of erotic content creation. Chat hosting can be seen as an extension of pre-internet phone sex lines. Phone sex workers much like chat host are given a specific erotic script to expand on when in contact with clients, performing surface acting where they expand on callers sexual fantasies to create an unembodied fantasy which is not going to fulfilled (Flowers, 1998:15). Phone sex workers are under strict instruction to never share any personal information with clients under threat of termination, workers cannot use to phone lines to advertise their own services (Flowers, 1998:97). The phone sex company's have the monopoly of client information that workers could use to generate other sources of incomes.

Although non-contact sex work is not criminalised in South Africa and numerous places there are still specific risk with producing online erotic content. Non-contact sex workers in industries such as pornography work and webcamming are not vulnerable in the same way contact sex workers are, they are not frequent direct physical contact with clients which reduces that potentially violent encounters and the non-criminalisation reduces the occurrence of violent incidents with police (Hamilton, Barakat & Redmiles, 2022). However, there are specific dangers that accompany online erotic labour where workers are known to their clients, such as producing content for OnlyFans. A distinct difference about this kind of sex work is that workers are required to publish more information about themselves online, post more explicit content of themselves online and have a much more extensive online presence (Hamilton, Barakat & Redmiles, 2022:2). Doxxing<sup>1</sup> is an omnipresent threat for online sex

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<sup>1</sup> Doxxing is the non-consensual publishing of personal identifiable information about an individual

workers due to their visibility and accessibility to the public (Jones, 2016:244 ; Stutz et al., 2024). Doxxing can reduce a worker's feeling of safety and remove the benefits of being distanced from their clients (Hamilton, Barakat & Redmiles, 2022:15). Content theft is a common occurrence when making any kind of digital media, capping<sup>2</sup> can result not only in a loss of revenue of non-consensually distributed content but also can result in sex workers being outed (Hamilton, Barakat, & Redmiles, 2022:16; Jones, 2016:240). Online sex workers also run a high risk of shadow banning<sup>3</sup> and account deletion due to the stigmatisation of sex work. Although it is not immediately read as violence digital discrimination and deplatforming of sex workers is an act of violence (Coyote RI, 2022:22). The regulation of online sex work deeply embedded with anti-sex work stigma.

The expansion of direct to consumer sites was amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic response led to South Africa and many other countries legislating stay at home orders which meant many people could not access their workplaces and wages. This meant that many people needed to find a way to make money while staying at home. These conditions were ideal for the expansion of OnlyFans to thrive. Lockdowns meant that people needed to find a form of income that they could do from their home, this gap was filled for many by OnlyFans and other similar sites. Although the exact increase in revenue and subscription are not publicly disclosed by OnlyFans, it is fair to say they experienced considerable growth as a company. The growth of OnlyFans is due to a convergence of several factors; contact sex workers were unable to see clients resulting in them moving to making content online, pornography studios could no longer film meaning pornography workers needed to start filming from home and many non-sex working individuals began creating erotic content (Rubattu, Perdion & Brooks-Gordon, 2023:4). An academic analysis of newspaper articles regarding 'digital sexual labour' found a prevalent discourse about OnlyFans and related online erotic labour was booming during the lockdown. There is also a strong discourse of online erotic labour being a tool used to overcome Covid-19's effect on individual loss of income. Although Rubattu, Perdion and Brooks-Gordon (2023) analyses newspaper articles from the United Kingdom, South African newspaper media has also concurred that OnlyFans boomed during the Covid-19 lockdown. Court (2021) documents contact sex workers turning to OnlyFans because their in person work was restricted due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

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<sup>2</sup> Capping is the non-consensual screen recording of live-stream or video

<sup>3</sup> The act of restricting or limiting a user's access to certain parts of an online community in a manner that is not immediately noticeable to the user, regardless of whether this action is initiated by a person or algorithm

## Legislation of online erotic content

Erotic content creators rely on a third-party site to host their content and facilitate their transactions; this means that the worker's income is dependent on the function of platforms they do not own (Easterbrook-Smith, 2022). This leaves workers uniquely vulnerable to potential shifts in the corporate policy of the platforms that they depended on to work. The globalised nature of online erotic labour means that national legislation can often be surpassed by legislation in the country the site is based in. In 2018, the USA introduced Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) and the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA), both of which aimed to hold sites liable for facilitating sex trafficking by hosting adverts of trafficking victims and coerced workers. These acts removed websites immunity for hosting advertisements of erotic service from potentially trafficked/coerced people and held them explicitly criminally responsible for facilitating these crimes (Cowen & Colosi, 2019: 286). The passing of the laws was applauded by feminists and politicians, on the face of it these laws are useful for protecting potential victims. The US Government Accountability Office found that within the first three years of the bills passing, 1 criminal case was being tried and 1 civil case claiming damages using SESTA-FOSTA (Government Accountability Office, 2021). In practical terms this legislation meant that sex workers were expelled en masse from social media and websites hosted in the United States sex workers used to advertise in-person services were shut down overnight (Albert, 2022). The negative impact of this legislation on sex workers is hard to overstate, safe advertising spaces were lost, screening client screening procedures and blacklists were lost, reliable booking infrastructure was eliminated (Coyote RI, 2022: 10). For sex workers in New Zealand a country where sex work is fully decriminalised, who used websites located in the USA to advertise in person erotic labour the entire overnight they could no longer solicit and vet potential clients (Tichenor, 2020). Tichenor (2020) demonstrates the globalised nature of the internet, legislative action in one country has a knock on effect in other countries.

In 2020, Pornhub's banking partners suspended their ties with them, which resulted in people who derived an income from selling their content on the site immediately being unable to generate earnings (Cole, 2020). The decision to suspend banking systems came on the heels of SESTA and FOSTA; this legislation is only in place in the USA but has global impacts. What is also notable about this law being used to target erotic content creators is that creating and selling pornography is legal in the United States. In addition to banking conglomerates suspending Pornhub's payment processing functions, the personal banking accounts and credit

cards are frequently suspended without warning (Pollak, 2022). People working as erotic content creators for formal pornography studios or erotic content creators for sites such as OnlyFans report banks closing their account and withholding their balance indefinitely (Pollak, 2022). The explicitly stigmatised nature of sex work creates an ever-present sense of instability in workers, while in a tangible way making them vulnerable to exploitation. If someone is suddenly without any financial support they are more likely to engage in risky behaviours out of desperation.

On an economic level the increasingly diffused and platform-mediated nature of online erotic content creation has created experiences that are in line with broader trends in the gig economy (Marceta, 2021). Romanian women's experiences of webcamming developed the concept of 'flexi(nse)curity,' the tension between the labour they provide and their lack of security (Vlase & Preoteasa, 2021). The amount and intensity of labour they performed remained somewhat consistent but the income varied wildly on a regular basis (Vlase & Preoteasa, 2021). Writing in the British context Bowen (2021:40) echoes this sentiment by classifying the sex industry as a 'dual-labour', finding that engagement in the sex industry was usually a way to supplement income from other 'formal' work. Workers previously employed by the 'centralised industry' experience increasing precarity, they have to have several revenue streams in order to make an income (Bowen, 2021:41). Moving into the Global South, in the Philippines workers webcamming can potentially earn a lucrative income, most of the platform's workers sell their content on are geared towards a Global North client-based resulting in a very favourable exchange rate (Matthews, 2017). The job market in the Philippines (similarly to South Africa) is pervaded with widespread unemployment and job scarcity resulting in extreme levels of poverty, this type of work can tangibly improve the workers quality of life (Matthews, 2017). For the Filipino webcam-operates their engagement in online erotic labour served as an intermittent form of transitional labour that they use to meet their immediate needs while searching for other more permanent forms of work (Matthews, 2017).

## Perceptions of pornography workers

In order to fully appreciate the participants individual experiences of anti-sex work stigma it is useful to understand how other non-contact sex workers are perceived. Although the following literature is situated within the context of the United States of America, similar themes will be echoed in the findings of this research in Chapter 5. Pornography is perhaps the most visible kind of sex work, it is fairly easy to find and consume pornographic content (Weitzer, 2023:7). Despite the fact that pornography workers are some of the most visible sex workers, there is

academic research exploring their lived experiences. This fundamental disregard of pornography workers epistemologies has resulted in research based in surmising, when Evans-DeCicco and Cowan (2001:358) examined American students' perceptions of male and female pornography workers<sup>3</sup> their overall perception of pornography dictates the judgements and stereotypes they hold. A common social perception, although it is often echoed in the academy, of female pornography workers is the 'damaged goods hypothesis' (Evans-DeCicco & Cowan, 2001; Polk & Cowan, 1996). The 'damaged goods hypothesis' assumes that in order to work in pornography women must "...come from desperate backgrounds and are less psychologically healthy compared to typical women." (Griffith, et al., 2012:622; Evans-DeCicco & Cowan, 2001). This stereotype also assumes disproportionately high substance dependency and a history of childhood sexual abuse (Griffith, et al., 2012:622). When researchers interviewed female pornography workers about their psychologic wellbeing, history of sexual abuse and substance abuse, they found that the incidents of each of these factors matched that of the sample non-sex working women (Griffith, et al., 2012; Abbott:1999). The damaged goods hypothesis also demonstrates that perceptions of pornography workers and more broadly sex workers are distinctly gendered. When asked to rate their perceptions of male pornography workers both men and women rated them more highly than female pornography workers, what is notable is that women surveyed perceived the female pornography workers as significantly more 'deviant' than the men surveyed (Evans-DeCicco & Cowan, 2001:359). Female sex workers are hyper-visible in anti-sex work discourse because of their defiance of normative female sexuality (Evans-DeCicco & Cowan, 2001:356). These assumptions about the mental state of pornography performers are extended to condemn pornographers as a whole.

## Platform mediated gig work

This research sought to explore the experiences of people performing online erotic labour. In order to understand the specific experiences of my participants it is important to understand the contemporary labour landscape that informs these experiences. The world of work is one increasingly characterised by precarity for workers. Standard work can be understood as a permanent full-time contract with one employer where all labour protections are applied (Rubery et al., 2018:510). Precarious or non-standard work can be understood as a worker engaged in on-demand short term labour resulting in people doing several small jobs or having a series of short-term contracts with multiple employers; they are not subject to the same legal protections as standard workers (Rubery et al., 2018:510). Although all non-standard work is somewhat precarious there is great diversity in the level of precarity a worker experiences. A

flourishing sector within non-standard work is gig work. Although all gig work can be considered non-standard work, it is a separate category. In order to be considered gig work it must be temporary labour with flexibility in when/how/where how it is performed with task-based remuneration (Wood et al., 2016:334). Although not all gig work is facilitated by the internet/technology, the labour that this research examines is. Platform-mediated gig work refers to a system in which digital platforms facilitate workers to sell their labour either directly to consumers (such as Uber) or to perform ad-hoc labour for a platform (such as MTurkers) (Schwellnus et al, 2019). Platform-based gig workers experience a unique dimension of labour precarity because of their dependency on their specific platforms to facilitate their labour. Platform-mediated gig workers cannot book work or receive payments without the facilitation of their platform. Gig workers can easily lose their ability to work because of poor customer ratings, changes in the platform's terms of service or after a period of inactivity on the platform (Vallas and Schor 2020). Although a large number of platform mediated gig workers perform the functions of a full-time employee, they are legally classified as independent contractors who cannot access the protections of standard work such as sick leave. It is within this specific labour context that my participants' experiences of online erotic labour is located. The expansion of digital labour has result in a new class of workers has developed the knowledge worker. A knowledge worker can be simply understood as a worker is some who deals in the expansion and creation of data and knowledge (Cortada, 1998:7). Digital knowledge work can encompass the creation of knowledge, data, online media content, social relationships and digital communication (Fuchs, 2010:1). It is within this specific labour context that my participants' experiences of online erotic labour is located.

## Conceptualising online labour in South Africa

When conceptualising online labour it is clear the is a dual-market labour system, as described above digital workers are mostly classified as knowledge workers. The online labour market is divided into the producers of knowledge mostly data scientists and information processing workers who are in the consistent process of upskilling (Huws, 2003: 161). And the working class or the cybertariat, who produce immaterial online labour where deskilling and delocalisation will put a downward trajectory on the earning outcomes (Fuchs, 2010:6). It is within this downward mobility of online labour that the participants online labour is located. Within the South Africa labour context non-standard work is becoming more pronounced within all forms of labour (Allan et al., 2001). South Africa has seen extensive proliferation of online labour due to the large number of internet users (Kavese, Mbali & Anyikwa, 2022:6) In Kavese, Mbali & Anyikwa (2022) study of platform-based gig work in the Eastern Cape found

majority of this kind of work was location-based gig work such as food delivery drivers (Kavese, Mbali & Anyikwa, 2022,18). However there is a sector of workers doing platform-based gig work, unfortunately the exact proportion of these workers is unknown (Kavese, Mbali & Anyikwa, 2022:19). This study noted the same challenges faced by online gig workers as listed above.

Through critical engagement with the literature explored within this literature review, research that foregrounds the lived experiences of people who perform online erotic labour although growing, are scarce. This gap in the literature is even more pronounced in boarder global south perspective and even more so across the African context. The majority of research about sex work and erotic labour in the South African context focuses on contact-full service, street or brothel-based sex workers. The South African academic institution has not yet built a rich understanding of the experiences and unique challenges that are faced by people who perform online erotic labour. It is this gap in that this research is located

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Research paradigm

A critical theory paradigm informs the philosophical underpinnings of this research, because the purpose of this research is to understand the subjective lived experience of people performing online erotic labour within the wider power structures that influence these experiences. Critical theory will be understood in this research as a research paradigm that "...is directed at interrogating values and assumptions, exposing hegemony and injustice, challenging conventional social structures and engaging in social action." (Crotty, 1998:157). Critical theory rejects the positivist ideology that research is neutral, and the researcher is an objective disembodied entity conveying the ultimate truth they were able to discern using pure logic (Scotland, 2012). Critical theory views research as inherently conveying the specific values of the researcher, however that does not mean a total lack of objectivity. Rather, it means a reflexive process of constant review. This research's location within a SWIF framework was developed through consultation with academic literature and collaboration with my participants. The findings of this research were created through an ongoing reflexive reiterative process of co-creation between myself and my participants.

The ontological perspective of critical theory is grounded in historical realism which understands social reality as being constantly shaped and reshaped through the interplay between intersecting identity factors and broader power structures (Scotland, 2012). It is the interplay between these macro and micro factors that shape individual perceptions of their own lived reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:110). Through this paradigm, this research worked towards making sense of how broader socio-historical contexts created my participants' individual experiences of performing online erotic labour. Specifically, I was interested in how my participants experienced their labour, how online erotic labour is located within the wider context of platform-mediated precarity, and how my participants experience and navigate the stigmatisation of erotic labour. From an ontological perspective, the critical paradigm eschews the use of grand-narratives that conceptualized individual experience as solely the result of structural factors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is for this reason that this paradigm is best suited for the research problem. It allows for an intersectional analysis of my participants' experiences by acknowledging how the multiple identities each participant holds shapes and reshapes their reality while also acknowledging their ability to reshape the world around them.

Critical theory's epistemology views knowledge as being "...both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society." (Scotland, 2012:13). This epistemological perspective acknowledges that knowledge is hierarchical, but also that the hierarchy can be disrupted. The critical theory paradigm also highlights how language is not, as it is commonly thought, value-neutral. Language is a reflection of the power structures that developed it; language creates understanding which determines future experience (Scotland, 2012:13). "Stories turn into knowledge, and knowledge transforms into matter." (Salami, 2020:13). The way in which language is used within research can either challenge or support existing hegemonic power structures. Frequently when sex workers and erotic labourers are written about both in research and media, it is done in an incredibly dehumanising way, which in very real terms contributes to violence against this community (Weitzer, 2006). It is because of this that I have explicitly chosen to use the terms sex work(er)/erotic labour because of their relationship to the sex work inclusionary politics in which this research is rooted. The use of this terminology is informed by several sex worker-lead/run organisations advocating for just approaches on how to talk about sex work and erotic labour responsibly and ethically (Sonke Gender Justice, 2014; Miller, 2018; African Sex Worker Alliance, 2022; Richter et al., 2015; Jeffreys, 2010). The critical theory paradigm is further justified from an epistemic perspective, through the gap in current literature which neglects the lived experiences of sex workers as a whole, and even more so the experience of people who perform online erotic labour - this gap is largely informed by historical structures of power and knowledge creation. Critical theory emphasizes the need for epistemological justice. This research endeavours to enact this by centring the experiences of those who perform online erotic labour as opposed to the experiences of those consuming it.

Although the interpretivist paradigm, which also understands ontology and epistemology as being social constructed and contextually situated, is very similar to critical theory, it is not the best fit for this research. The reason for specifically selecting critical theory is its expressly political nature. Whereby interpretivism advocates for making the politics of research clear, it is descriptive in nature whereas critical theory is transformative. The long-term ambition of this research is to make any sort of minor contribution to the destigmatising of specifically online erotic labour and all sex work more broadly. In that aim I take the same position as Weitzer (2018:720) "Destigmatization is both an academic and a political issue.". As Weitzer (2018) emphasises, a contribution to the destigmatisation of sex work and erotic labour is praxis which cumulates towards change. This research is, as Scotland (2012:13) affirmed, not merely concerned with how things are but on how they ought to be.

## Research design

This research was conducted using a qualitative design within the critical theory paradigm. The purpose of a qualitative research methodology is to understand "...life worlds 'from the inside out'..." from the perspective of those who experience it (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004:3). A qualitative design creates a rich inductive description of the experiences of individuals that necessitates interpretation. A qualitative design allowed me to deeply engage with my participants' experiences while also being able to contextualise their experiences in the broader structures in which they are located. This research seeks to bridge the gap in literature by providing rich qualitative data that prioritises the lived experiences and the voices of people performing erotic labour.

## Research objectives

The primary objective of this research was to gain a richer understanding of the nuances in South Africans who perform online erotic labour lived experiences. Focusing specifically on how the participants experienced and navigated the labour of their online erotic labour and how the participants experience and navigate the stigmatisation of erotic labour. As reflected in the interview guide (Appendix 3) the questions were structured to specifically gain a better understanding of firstly the practical elements of their erotic labour and their experiences of that labour. Then secondly to develop a comprehensive overview of their experiences of stigmatisation and their navigation of that stigmatisation.

## Data collection

This research used a combination of primary and secondary data in order to develop a deep understanding of lived experiences of people performing erotic labour. My primary data came from a series of semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview as a method creates a dialogue between the researcher and participant guided by a blend of closed-and-open ended questions with the goal of better understanding the participant's perspective of a specific experience (Adams, 2015:493). I used an interview schedule (Appendix 1) that I had developed prior to participant interviews to give the interviews structure, but I allowed the conversation to unfold naturally. A semi-structured interview was selected for this study because of its ability to delve into participants' rich accounts of their experiences of a specific phenomenon (De Vos et al., 2011:351). The reason that I elected to use the semi-structured interview method was because it allowed me to have a conversation-like interview while still having a few guiding topics to uncover my participants specific knowledge. (Hesse-Biber, 2007: 115) The semi-structured interview was best suited because of its flexibility in terms of allowing me as a

researcher to probe any interesting ideas that emerge while also creating common themes across the interviews which creates some standardisation across the data. This type of interviewing is in line with the critical theory underpinnings of this research as it situated the participant as an expert on the subject and they are given the maximum opportunity to guide the research. Their insight is more valuable than the research that went into creating the interview schedule, so they are able to reshape the research depending on their experience.

The interview schedule was primarily made up of open-ended questions but also included several shorter close-ended questions in order to gather some uniform demographic data about the participants. The interview schedule was created after conducting systematic review of relevant literature as detailed in the **'Chapter 3: Literature Review'** to provide some foundational knowledge of how online sex work functions as an industry, as well as some technical knowledge about how the sites operate. As this research is concerned with both labour and stigma, I tried to create a blend of questions that would provide insight into both topics. The section on the gig-economy/platform capitalism also enabled me to better understand the landscape of online work while also being able to locate my participants' experiences within their broader socio-historical context. Bolstering my data collection with existing literature allowed me to reflect critically on the structural factors that informed my primary data, in alignment with my critical theory paradigm.

All of the interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams, each participant was offered data in order to join the interview but none accepted the offer. At the beginning of the interview the participants were given the choice to turn their cameras off to enhance their anonymity, however every participant chose to have their cameras on during the interview which allowed me to capture their body language. Having online interviews also allowed for a physical separation between me and the participant which can make participants feel less vulnerable when discussing sensitive experiences with me. On a practical level, having online interviews allowed me to interview people located outside of Cape Town and scheduling a video call was more convenient for my participants' schedules. All of the participants had one interview lasting roughly 1 hour in length. All of the interviews were recorded which I then transcribed to use as direct quotes.

## Sampling

As the focus of this research is people with specific lived experiences a combination of non-probability purposive sampling methods was used. Purposive sampling deliberately selects participants who have the specialist knowledge that is relevant to the research (Etikan, Musa

& Alkassim, 2016:2). This focus of this research is on the lived-experiences of South Africans performing erotic labour online so this research had a particular sampling criterion:

1. The participant had to be over the age of 18
2. Have performed any kind of erotic labour online for remuneration
3. Where living in South Africa at the time they were performing erotic labour

Although the sampling criteria is very specific, I kept it somewhat broad in terms of what kinds of erotic labour the participants were performing. I did this so that the research could gain knowledge about how the different kinds of erotic labour being performed could affect the participants experiences. The sample of this research is made up of 5 participants performing 2 distinct kinds of erotic labour. The profiles of the participants and the type of erotic labour being performed will be further outlined later in the findings. Although my sample is relatively small, each interview yielded ‘thick’ descriptions of their experiences. The richness of the data that came from our conversations also necessitated a small sample in order to sufficiently engage with the data.

### **Composition of sample**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Type of erotic labour</b>
1.	Karl	Male	36	Content creation
2.	Stanley	Male	25	Content creation
3.	Dahlia	Female	27	Content creation
4.	Sally	Female	45	Chat host
5.	Cassidy	Female	56	Chat host

The process of recruiting participants proved to be a significant challenge for this research. Due to the stigmatisation of all erotic labour and sexual commerce, it can be difficult to make contact as a researcher. As I am unknown and not affiliated to any formal organisation, potential participants might find it difficult to trust me with their experiences. I tried several ways of making contact with potential participants with varying levels of success. I posted my recruitment poster (Appendix 3) on a private Facebook group for women, after a few initial queries this method proved unsuccessful. I decided against directly contacting potential participants through either the platform they were using for erotic labour or their linked social

media. This felt invasive of their personal and work lives, and I did not want to shift any of the labour onto them. I then made use of my social networks for recruitment which proved to be successful. People in my social network posted my poster on their social media and reached out to people they knew where performing online erotic labour on my behalf. My connection to someone in their existing social network gave me enough credibility for potential participants to engage with me about participating. Before the interviewing began, I send them all my information sheet (Appendix 2) to give them information about the research and so they had the required information to give informed consent.

## Data analysis

The data from the interviews was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. On a practical analysis level, thematic analysis can be understood as a method of data analysis used for “...developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative data set...” (Braun & Clarke, 2022:4). Reflexive thematic analysis as a method is slightly different than thematic analysis because of it understand that the role of the researcher is to actively generate themes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022:127). The themes and analysis I created from the data are in line with the political positionality of this research.

The first stage of my analysis process began when transcribing the interviews. As I watched the interview recording and transcribed the conversation, I added the notes I had made during the interviews as comments on the transcript. After reviewing all of the interview’s transcripts and becoming immersed in the data, I created a summary of the demographic details of each participant. I then began highlighting ideas that were similar, conflicting, or notable across all of the interviews. From these observations I identified which of these were relevant to the research focus of this study. After the process of immersion, I returned to the data and wrote up descriptive accounts of the key themes. Drawing on the descriptive accounts, I was able to generate 3 overarching themes of ‘*Experience of labour*’ ‘*Platform mediated precarity*’ and ‘*Experience of stigma*’. This allowed me to unpack the distinct similarities as well as differences between (and within) each participants’ account of their experiences.

Although I set the analysis phases out sequentially above, my analysis was not conducted in a strictly linear manner. In alignment with this research’s critical theory paradigm, this analysis was created in a reiterative process with continually reflexive engagement. Each phase overlapped with each other, and I often went back and forth between phases. The analysis I created was done through a reflexive process of continual evaluation and re-evaluation of my influence as a researcher on both the data creation and analysis. As is in line with reflexive

thematic analysis as a method, I have created the analysis of this data through my personal engagement with theory and my participants.

A significant ethical challenge that is integral to thematic analysis is that interpreting the data is also a process of transforming it. The conclusions that I have drawn from my data set have been informed by the specific politics that this research is grounded in, these have all been made clear. I have specifically made meaning from my data in the way I have because of my embodied position as a researcher; analysing this data using a different positionality might have generated different observations. I have gone to great effort to represent each participants experience as true to their stories as possible and to create a representation of a marginalised community that does not incur further harm onto them.

## Ethics

The ethical basis of this research was grounded in the feminist ethics of care. The feminist ethic of care as it will be understood in this research as the "...activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible." (Fisher & Tronto, 1990:43). I understand this to mean, I as a researcher have a responsibility to care for my participants and the wider communities, we are all embedded in. This research has been conducted through a reiterative process of co-creation with my participants and my wider social networks, that have shaped and reshaped this research.

## Caring for participants

An ethical challenge I ran into in real time was how to best care for my participants who shared with me stories of violence and trauma that they had experienced. I implemented a strategy of care within my interviewing process to reduce the potential for re-traumatisation. Throughout the interviews I paid close attention to my participants' tone of voice and body language when broaching sensitive areas to sense their comfort levels. I reassured them that they did not have answer anything they did not want to and did not probe when I sensed they might be uncomfortable. I made sure to acknowledge my participants feelings about their experiences and to frequently check-in with them throughout the interview. I tried to be as responsive as possible to their needs throughout the interview reminding them, they only had to share as much as they were comfortable with. I made sure that my participant information sheet (Appendix 2) had contact details for relevant NGO's that they could contact if they require further psycho-social support.

## Use of language

Both sex workers and erotic labourers are stigmatised and consistently subjected to various forms of violence. Violence that can be perpetuated and excused by academic research ergo implementing solid ethical principles and strategies were of paramount importance. Within sex work research exists an inherent tension between sex workers, activists, and the academic institution who should be setting the agenda. Conducting research in this field involves a negotiation between creating research that is of value to both the sex workers, activists, and the academy (Lowthers et al., 2017). In light of these concerns, the research paradigm and theoretical orientations of this research provided a guide for best ethical practice. This practice was rooted in informed consent, participant self-determination, troubling the researcher-participant hierarchy, and epistemological justice. As discussed within the research paradigm, language is of the utmost importance because of the inherently political nature of any research about sex work and erotic labour, and how damaging it can be to a highly marginalized group, intentionally or not. This means I tried not to use/include dehumanising and stigmatising words or descriptions in my research. Sex work abolitionists will seize on any opportunity to re-write or misinterpret sex work/ erotic labour research to support their political agenda, so it is vital that this research does its best not to accommodate this agenda (Jeffreys, 2010:1).

## Anonymity and consent

The data that was generated from the interviews has been kept safe according to the university's privacy standards. All of the participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms and I was very mindful of not revealing too many personal details about my participants. After a request from 1 of my participants I have chosen not to name the exact platforms Sally and Cassidy work for, to name their employers could make them identifiable to their social circle and the platform which could jeopardise their immediate safety and employment security. I have however chosen to disclose which platforms Karl, Stanley and Dahlia produce content for; I have done this because of the public-facing nature of OnlyFans and XXXclusive. Each of them spoke very candidly about which sites they belong to and their experiences of them. The specific platforms that they use also directly shape their experiences, whereas chatroom platforms have homogenous rules meaning that the exact sites are interchangeable.

Due to me not having any physical contact with my participants, standard consent practices proved to be challenging. Before the interviewing stage, I had intended to get written and verbal consent from the participants. However once interviewing began, getting written consent was not feasible. In order to provide written consent, the participants would have needed to have

access to additional digital resources, such as printing and scanning a completed consent form or a computer equipped with PDF signing capabilities. Collecting a consent form would have put an unfair burden on the participants so I instead elected for verbal consent. At the beginning of the interview, I outlined that their participation in this study was voluntary and all of the information they provided would be confidential. The initial discussion included reviewing the information sheet (Appendix 2) and answering any questions from the participants; I asked if they consented to being a part of this study and if they consented to me recording the interview. After the participant gave their consent, I started the recording and asked them again for the recording to provide their verbal consent. After the interview was conducted each participant was sent a copy of the interview transcript (I had edited this transcript to anonymise the data) to allow them the opportunity to fully appreciate their information that will be included in the study, whilst also allowing them to redact any information they did not want me to include in this study. After receiving the copy of their transcripts none of the participants wanted any information redacted from the study.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

In this chapter I will present and analyse the findings obtained from the interviews with the participants of this research based on the aims of this research.

Firstly, I will provide more extensive profiles of each participant followed by a profile of the platforms they used to perform erotic labour. The platform profiles will provide an overview of how they function followed by the terms service of each site. Terms of service within this context refers to the terms of service between the participants (the person selling their labour) and platform (the entity facilitating the participants labour). Once the participants and their platforms have been introduced the themes as told by the participants will be explored. The first chapter '**Experience of Labour**' will explore the participants insights into the practical and emotional labour they perform during their work as erotic content creators and chat hosts. This chapter will also investigate the effect the type of erotic labour being engaged in influences the participants experiences of their labour. The second chapter '**Platform-mediated Precarity**' will explore the participants experiences of labour precarity they specifically experience as gig-workers and how their individual experiences are located within the wider context of platform-mediated precarity. This chapter will then investigate how the stigmatised nature of erotic labour and platform mediated precarity coalesces creating a distinct category of platform-mediated precarity. The final chapter '**Experiences of Stigma**' will explore the participants experiences and understanding of anti-sex work stigma as people performing online erotic labour. The participants navigation of this stigmatising will shed light on how they navigate anti-sex work stigma.

### Participant profiles

In this section I outline the profile of each participant by providing a short personal biography and an overview about their engagement in online erotic labour. All five participants were over the age of 18 and lived in South Africa while they were engaged in online erotic labour. Three participants engaged in online erotic labour whereby they created their own content that they hosted on OnlyFans or XXXclusive. Each of the participants creating online erotic content also sold personalised content directly to clients. None of the content-creating participants had previously or at the time of the interview engaged in any contact sex work. They all had other sources of income the entire time they were creating content. Two participants engaged in online erotic labour providing chat hosting services in online chatrooms. Both chat hosting participants over the course of their employment were solely financially dependent on their online erotic labour.

Karl, a 36-year-old male, used OnlyFans for about a year before deleting his profile. He created solo erotic content that he categorised as being ‘soft-core’ modelling. He did not publicly post any nudity directly to his page. His client base was exclusively men, mostly openly queer but with a significant number of them being closeted. Karl’s page was briefly subscription-based but his profile was free to view for majority of the time he was active on the platform.

Stanley is a 25-year-old male who has primarily used OnlyFans since 2020 to sell his solo erotic content. At the time of interviewing, Stanley had recently created an XXXclusive account. Stanley does not show his face in any of his main feed content. The vast majority of his client base is men, mostly openly queer but some closeted, and occasionally women. Stanley’s page is subscription-based meaning clients pay a monthly fee to view his profile. Occasionally he will have paid live-streams.

Dahlia is a 27-year-old woman who has used OnlyFans since 2020 to sell her erotic content. Her content is mostly solo but does not feature actual sex acts. Her client base is heterosexual men. Dahlia’s page operates on a pay-per-view model meaning the profile and some content is visible for free but most of her content is behind a pay-wall.

Sally, a 45-year-old woman, worked as a chatroom operator for 18 months, which was her sole source of income. She is a single mom with a teenaged child who lived with her during this time. Sally and her child have since emigrated from South Africa to Europe.

Cassidy is a 56-year-old woman who has been working as a chatroom operator for the last 5 years. Majority of that time she has had other sources of income, but it was her sole source of income for several months when she was otherwise unemployed. She has adult children who did not live with her during this time. Cassidy is the only participant who has engaged in contact sex work. From the mid-1980s until the early-2000s she engaged in various forms of sex work such as stripping, but mostly worked as a full-service sex worker on the street and occasionally out of brothels.

## Platform profiles

### OnlyFans

OnlyFans is a digital platform that facilitates direct-to-consumer content sales. Although OnlyFans is not explicitly a site for erotic content, its terms of service that was permissive of sexual content, unlike similar sites like Patreon, meant that it became a popular site for people to sell their sexual content on. OnlyFans as a business allows people to set up profiles and host their content on the site, acting as a third-party to handle the financial transactions between the client (which the site terms a ‘fan’) and the creators, OnlyFans takes 20% of the creators’ earnings. Creators are able to earn money on the site by setting a monthly subscription fee for

clients to view their accounts, capped between \$4.99 and \$50.00 (USD), have pay-per-view content that clients can purchase once off, capped at \$250.00, live-streaming content to clients, and they are able to take requests from clients for personalised content. Creators can access their earnings at most on a weekly basis by releasing them to a third-party app such as pay-pal, and these third-party apps usually have a minimum transaction of \$20.00. The payments themselves are made between the client and site, and then the site to the client; there is no money directly transferred between clients and creator on the site.

## XXXclusive

XXXclusive is a rival site to OnlyFans which is explicitly advertised for erotic content creators. XXXclusive operates under the same model as OnlyFans. A unique aspect of XXXclusive is that it enables creators to watermark their content. When a client views content their account details become watermarked onto the content to prevent content being shared without the creator's consent. XXXclusive caps monthly subscription fees between \$5.00 and \$99.00 (USD), pay-per-view content is capped between \$5.00 and \$1000.00, and workers are also able to charge clients up to \$1000.00 to send them personal messages. XXXclusive has no limits on the number of times a creator can withdraw from their site wallet. However, for South African creators they have a \$500.00 withdrawal minimum, and XXXclusive takes a \$25.00 withdrawal fee on each transfer. This withdrawal is also released into a third-party payment processing app such as pay-pal, just as is the case with OnlyFans. The payments themselves are made between the client and site then the site to the client, there is no money directly transferred between clients and creator on the site. Each site has specific terms of service for both the user and content creator to adhere to. The following provides an understanding of the terms of service for both OnlyFans and XXXclusive.

## Site terms of service

The technical terms of service of OnlyFans and XXXclusive are very similar in the ways they regulate content creation. In the interest of keeping this section succinct, I will outline them simultaneously. In order to have a creator account, both sites require the creator to provide a copy of a valid identification document with their date of birth clearly visible to ensure they are at least 18 years old, as well as needing to provide two pictures of their face to match to the ID. Only the moderators of the site have access to this information. If a creator posts content that has another person in it, even if they are only in the background, they must either tag the other person's account or provide the same ID verification. The creators are also subject to the terms of service of the site that guide what content is allowed on the site. These terms of service

include standard legal prohibitions like bestiality and child abuse material, but they also include other site-specific regulations prohibiting speech the site deems abusive. These terms are determined by the site managers but are also influenced by what the payment partners deemed acceptable. Although the terms of service act as a legal contract for the creator to follow, they are often opaque in their meanings and easily changeable depending on the site owner's whims. As discussed in the literature review, the moderation of content and what is deemed as acceptable is not evenly applied. The policing of these policies tends to be more heavily focused on creators with marginalised identities.

## Chatrooms

Chatroom hosts are on-demand service providers for platforms that require them to reply to client messages. The nature of the work the participants were tasked with as chatroom hosts was replying to messages from paying clients of sex and dating chatroom websites that believe they are messaging with another real client. The hosts are presented with a profile that the website has created to act as during the chat exchange. As a message would appear on the site's interface for my participants to answer, they would be shown the profile of the client and the profile of who the client believed they were chatting with. The profiles consisted of a profile picture and a short biography section that is visible to the client and the operator. The hosts are also given access to a gallery of pictures of the person in the profile, should the client request them. The operator then needs to act as the person in the profile when replying to the clients, sending a few short sentences back to the client. Once the hosts have replied to the most recent message on their feed, they will then be sent the next most recent unanswered message on the site. Each operator is engaged in several chats simultaneously, meaning that the client's messages are usually being answered by multiple hosts. Although the hosts have some idea of the type of site the clients are logged into, the hosts and clients are logged into 2 different websites, and the chatroom platform technologically mediates the messages sending them between the two separate websites. The hosts are paid per-message but are required to meet a weekly specified minimum amount. The chat hosts are equipped with a 'panic room' button where they can report clients to the site managers for prohibited behaviour, the site strictly forbids discussing any criminalised behaviour such as drug-use or threats of violence. The hosts are also expected to follow strict terms of service set out by the site. When asked if chat host are allowed to enforce any sort of boundaries during chats with clients (aside from prohibited topics such as drug use) Sally and Cassidy both said they have to keep the chat going.

## Experience of labour

This chapter will explore the participants experiences of performing erotic labour. This chapter will provide an overview of the practical labour that the participants are performing, as well as explore the emotional labour that is required of them. The meanings they create through their work as told by them is explored. The experience of labour for the participants is directly tied to the type of erotic labour they were performing and the demands of the platform they were using to facilitate their labour. For the chat hosting participants Sally and Cassidy, the demands placed on their labour is very different to that of the content creating participants Karl, Stanley and Dahlia. This chapter will contrast their experiences while placing their labour into the broader context of online platform-mediated gig work.

For the chat host participants, their platforms control their labour in a way similar to that of an employee engaged in a standard work arrangement. As per Fuchs (2008:186), I found that this is partly because chatroom platform performs all of its own business functions - it owns the platform that the chats take place on - it holds all of the existing client information such as contact details for future advertising; and is responsible for all of the financial transaction both the clients payment to the site and the payment of the workers on the site; and is responsible for client acquisition through advertising as well as the software maintenance of the site. As a result, the chat hosts labour consists of a single task replying to the message their platform presents to them on a continuous loop, without their labour their platforms could not extract profits from clients. This type of labour can be categorised as knowledge labour. They are both functionally self-employed and in control of their mean of production (their computers and cognitive skills) but are forced to sell this labour to the platforms that own the only means for them to exchange their labour for capital (Fuchs, 2008:186). The distribution of ownership can be seen in the following example. When asked how the chatrooms functioned for her in practice Sally responded:

Sally

“OK, so you get like a dating agency and you work for that dating agency. So what happens is that you get your computer and you log in every morning and they’ve accumulated a lot of clients. ... So all these men are paying, paying to per message to message the woman that they think they talking and on the profile you are, it can be random pictures of women who sold their photos to this agency. ... So it’s sort of like one line when I say one not so you you don’t really have to remember too much about it, but there’s a section there, you know where you add notes about this person and

whatever. And I mean it was continuous. There was some days I would go do up to 500 messages.”

In this excerpt Sally outlines the functions the chatroom platform serves in facilitating the labour she is employed to provide. The chatroom platform is responsible for creating and maintaining a consumer demand for their chatroom service and the chat hosts are exclusively responsible for providing the chat service. The chat hosts are presented with a basic ‘erotic script’ as a guide for them to embellish on for each message. The platforms Cassidy and Sally utilized strictly forbid chat hosts from sharing any personal information with clients. The chatrooms source the media needed to create profiles for the chat hosts to pose as during the chats, keeping them completely anonymous to the clients. For the chat host participants their platforms perform all the traditional functions for them meaning that they are not required to perform the labour of self-promotion or content creation. The chatroom platform acts as a ‘boss’ for Sally and Cassidy fulfilling the functions that facilitate business in standard working contexts. Chat hosting is gig work in the sense that hosts have no long-term contracts and flexibility in terms of scheduling their working hours, although there are minimum requirements, the roles they perform for their platforms more closely resemble that of standard work employees. This means the chat hosts have limited autonomy over their labour in comparison to the content creating participants. This points to a fundamental difference in the types of ownership the participants have over their labour. The chat hosting participants have no ownership of the products of their labour. As they provide on-demand labour they do not have the ability to respond to algorithmic precarity.

For the content creating participants the platform OnlyFans or XXXclusive acts as a marketplace for them to sell their labour directly to clients. The platform only performs two business functions; The platform facilitates the transactions between the participants and their clients and hosting their accounts and erotic content on their platform in the same way YouTube hosts content. The content creating participants have access to information about their client base that they can use for advertising and future transaction, however they do not have direct access to their banking information. The content creating participants are responsible for all the other aspects of their erotic labour from producing a commodity for sale and creating a demand for that commodity. The content creator participants create a piece of erotic digital media such as pictures, videos or live-streams that they then sell to clients. OnlyFans in this fulfils the business facilitation functions that are more closely associated with that of true freelancing. The content creating participants are not performing the functions of a full-time employee in the same way the chat hosting participants are. However they are still knowledge

worker forced to sell their labour in the same way chat hosts are (Fuchs, 2008:186). When asked about the entire process that goes into a monthly cycle of creating erotic content Dahlia said:

Dahlia

“I would often kind of have a Pinterest board where I've kind of categorized like themes or maybe just like you know, in general aesthetics would kind of plan and output or maybe buy some lingerie that would match with that aesthetic ... I think the shoot itself would often take maybe an hour to an hour and a half of actual shooting, like getting ready before maybe takes half an hour. And then editing doesn't really take too long. ... So it's like almost like a week on week off with like one week being passive planning and then the one week being active shooting, uh editing then posting content.”

In the above passage Dahlia details, all of the tangible labour that is required in order to create her erotic content. Although she has used professional photography services before, majority of the practical labour is performed solely by her, a finding that was also consistent with Karl and Stanley's experiences. The content creating participants are free (within the parameters of the platforms terms of service) to decide what kind of content they are going to produce. When Karl was asked to describe the content, he produced for his OnlyFans account he described it as:

Karl

“...it started out as like I was like I was trying to do kind of like suggestive, like homoerotic stuff. ... But like super fun to do, you know.”

Karl's quote demonstrates that in his experience as a content creator he was able to exert a certain level of control over what they want to create and exhibit. They can make choice about what they want to market. In this way the content creating participants are more responsive to their clients demands and can pre-empt changes in demand for their content, allowing themselves the flexibly adapt to client tastes. Once the content is produced the participants then need to market it themselves. Clients can find workers accounts through searching on the platform however the ease with which an account can be discovered is often volatile, which will be discussed further in the chapter 'Platform-mediated Precarity'. The primary way the content creating participants gain clients is through advertising their account on other social media sites. Both Stanley and Dahlia reported primarily using Twitter to promote their accounts because of its permissiveness towards erotic content creators. When asked about the labour that goes into promoting her account Dahlia said the following:

Dahlia

“Ohh yeah yeah yeah, because I think that will also often be a lot of answering requests when I do post like a A set I will just normally like have maybe three or four photos that I've taken as promotional content and then we'll link that [photo] set with the photos saying like, you know, kind of follow here for more.”

In the above passage Dahlia summarises the practical labour that goes into promoting her content. Dahlia's OnlyFans account is set-up using a pay-per-view model, her profile is viewable for free but she generates a some of her income through selling erotic photo sets for a once of fee. This means Dahlia needs to work at promoting ever photo set individually and consistently work at attracting clients. Up until the point in which the content creating participants actually finalise a financial transaction with a client their labour thus far is unpaid. The content creating participants although they have more autonomy over how they perform their labour they have to take on all of the risk and responsibility of producing and marketing their content. Unlike the chat host participants who have clearly defined parameters around their erotic labour the content creating participants must perform unpaid labour to create paid labour. The comparison between the two groups' labour exhibits a tension inherent in gig work, a worker having more autonomy over their labour results in the worker performing more labour to facilitate their own work.

Thus far the participants experiences of the practical aspects of their labour have been explored. A large component of each of the participants erotic labour is the performance of emotional labour. Emotional labour in this context refers to a requirement from employees/labourers to feel or at least give the impression they feel specific emotions during workplace interactions (Kruml & Geddes, 2000:8). The different kinds of erotic labour my participants performed dictated the kinds of emotional performances they were required to perform for clients and the effect this emotional labour had on them in work and social contexts.

For my chat host participants who had to personify person picture in the profile they are replying as, they needed to do the emotional labour of encouraging the clients to stay on the site as long as possible and to give clients the impression that the messages within the chat are all from the same person. The main task of each chat host is required to perform is the emotional labour of tailoring their replies to the demands of each client giving them the impression of they have the hosts undivided attention. When asked about how the chat hosts were meant to keep clients engaged in the chats for as long as possible Sally said the following:

Sally

And these men were desperate because they loved what you were talking to them about and loved what you had to say. That they're just kept paying and it used to cost them a fortune. But they believe 90% of them did really 90% of them did believe that they were talking to that woman in the photo.

In the above passage Sally lays out the basic pretence the interactions between clients and hosts would take. The role of the host within the chat is preform the emotional labour of a potential partner for the clients. The chat hosts needed to keep the clients fantasy alive to keep them logged in and paying the chatroom platform. Within each message exchange the chat host will create a new adaptation on a standard erotic templet (Nagy, 2021:64). When asked what adapting this templet looks like in practice Cassidy said the following:

Cassidy

“He'll come in and say, have you decided yet when I can lick your pussy and then you must come back and say do you have some wicked oral skills that you are going to impress me with and then you send that message, he might come back to you or he might go to another agent and then she then he's gonna answer like. Yes, I'm gonna show you such a good time or whatever.”

From the clients' perspectives they were chatting with 'real' people who were also looking for in person meetings and relationships. However, when these in person meetings never materialise, clients would turn their frustrations onto the chat hosts. Both Sally and Cassidy disclosed that clients would habitually become disrespectful and abrasive with chat hosts. The chat hosts are also under strict instructions to remain cordial and polite to clients at all times (unless the clients made direct threats of violence). When asked how she responds to clients becoming hostile with her while on chat Cassidy said the following:

Cassidy

“So if he says to you, fuck off and die, then you have to say what is happening. Are you having a bad day? Why are you changing and becoming nasty and put a little kiss there!”

In the above passage Cassidy outlines her strategy for managing the emotions of clients who have become hostile with her. In our conversation Sally also outlined a similar method for managing the emotions of hostile clients When asked to describe the nature of her chat host work Sally said “...you were there like to pacify the men.”. The chat hosts are required to keep

replying to whatever messages appear on their feeds<sup>4</sup>. However, as Cassidy a 5-year veteran of the chat hosting gig revealed there are creative strategies to avoid chatting to hostile clients. As she further elaborated on her above quote;

Cassidy

“And then if he still carries on ... I just log out, log out, give it a minute, log back in again he’s gone. you’ve got someone new.”

As Cassidy illustrates above the consistent refreshing feature of the chat feed means she can navigate the rules of the site to her benefit. The anonymous and rapidly updating nature of the chat site insulated both participants from experiencing negative emotional effects from interacting with hostile clients. When asked if she was ever hurt by negative chatroom interactions she replied;

Cassidy

No, because he doesn't know it's me. ... Don't take anything personally because it's not you, especially if you're doing the chats. That [the chatroom] is a fake thingy there, so don't don't take it personally.

Much like phone sex chat hosting creates ‘disembodied intimacy’, the customer experiences the intimacy of a private space to engage in their sexuality whereas the distance provides the workers with a safe distance from their clients (Flowers, 1998). To Cassidy the artificial nature of these interactions means she is not personally affected by client’s hostility. Although the chat hosts need to do the emotional labour of creating a sense of intimacy in each message there is no personal connection with the clients. The experiences of performing emotional labour of my chat hosting participants are in contrasted by the experiences of the content creating participants.

In order for people who create erotic content to sell their online content they need to develop their own client base and nurture relationships with existing clients. In order to grow and retain their client base erotic content creator need to perform the emotional labour of creating a relationship with clients. For all the content creating participants creating personalised content for clients generated for a large portion of their income from erotic labour. When asked which aspect of his erotic labour generated him the most income Stanley responded;

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<sup>4</sup> Unless they were against the site’s terms of service

Stanley

“But I would say definitely from requesting just because it's like more, I think it's like for them. It's like a very personal relationship. So yeah, I would make the bulk of my money from requests.”

In the above passage Stanley illustrates the both the practical labour and emotional labour that is involved in processing a personal request from a client. For Stanley and the other participants to generate an income from personal requests there are multiple streams of labour that take place simultaneously. On a practical level he must respond to the request which requires a sustained interaction with a client where Stanley must negotiate the type of content the client is requesting; If the request is a type of content that he routinely produces he will then have to negotiate the specific features the content the client wants. If the client requests content he is not comfortable producing he must either steer the client onto something he is willing to make or refuse them in a way that does not upset them. Stanley and his client then need to come to an agreement about how much the client will pay for the content. Stanley's quote also reveals that in order to get to the stage where clients are willing to pay more for content their needs to be an existing relationship. This interaction with clients is not only time consuming but can also be emotionally taxing, particularly when clients are expecting him to follow a particular 'erotic script' during the interaction. When Stanley was asked if he had defined boundaries between his erotic labour and personal life, he said the following:

Stanley

“Whereas you always kind of have to be on when you're making content. 'cause someone can send you a message, like at 3:00 AM and like, let's say you're awake and you kind of have to be on for that person. You know, you need to step into that headspace of, like, I'm turned on. What are you interested in? But I think on that aspect, it definitely has kind of bled into my civilian life.”

In the above passage Stanley explores how the lines between his work and personal life have become blurred creating a ubiquitous sense of working. Stanley who described himself as being very sex positive person who expressed he gets genuine joy and pleasure from his erotic labour, the boundary between performance and authentic expression is difficult to discern for him. This blurring together is not an inherently negative characteristic of erotic content creation, but it can result a psychological burden being placed on the worker to constantly perform eroticism. For Stanley his performance of erotic labour has resulted in a consistent pressure on his to always be performing eroticism. For Stanley the boundary separating his clients and friends is

ambiguous. When Stanley was asked how he felt about creating more personal relationships with his clients, he said the following:

Stanley

“You kind of my bestie, but then, like, you also like subscribed to my OnlyFans. It's so weird to navigate, but it's actually quite nice. I'm not going to lie, it's it's actually. It kind of like makes it worth it when you have those kind of relationships. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's like it's really something to be cherished, in my opinion. I love those kinda relationships.”

For Stanley a benefit associated with intimacy he has formed with his clients is the development of meaningful friendship. Although the develop of deeper connections with clients can have a positive influence on the experience of performing labour, it can also be accompanied by negative experiences. The more emotional invested workers become in their labour the more surplus value can be extracted from them in the form of free labour (Berg, 2021:132). Although for Stanley the emotional labour he performs when interacting with clients bleeds into his personal life, this was not universal for all the content creating participants. When asked if she felt she needed to perform emotional labour when interacting with potential clients Dahlia said:

Dahlia

“I think that I've mainly managed to find a way to separate like who Dahlia is as a person versus who Dalia is as a sex worker. And so for me, I think it's very easy to compartmentalize my brain and be like this is just a job for me. Like obviously I am being nice to them and being respectful, but these are all anonymous people that I don't really, you know, from a bar of soap.”

In the above passage Dahlia demonstrates that in her experience of erotic labour doing the emotional work of developing intimate relationships with her clients is not necessary to her financial success on the site. There is nuance to the experiences of people performing similar kinds of erotic labour. The different kinds of erotic labour the participants engaged in dictated how they experienced the practical and emotional aspects of their labour creating similar themes amongst the content creating participants, and the chat host participants. Even within those discreet groups there was nuances within each individual experience. Although the specifics of each participants experiences of their labour diverge, their erotic labour is platform-based gig work which is located in a larger system of platform mediated precarity.

## Platform-mediated precarity

This chapter explores the participants experience of platform-mediated precarity as detailed through their experiences. The participants' online erotic labour is firmly located within the broader gig economy which means they are subject to platform-mediated precarity. The participants are subject to the same vulnerabilities as other precarious workers, but they are also uniquely vulnerable as platform workers and again as platform workers doing stigmatised work. This chapter will investigate my participants' experiences of platform mediated precarity.

Chatroom hosts Sally and Cassidy perform customer-facing labour for a company that they are not permanently employed by nor do they have a short-term contract with. The chatroom hosts act as independent contractors who perform an on-demand service for the platform they are based on. They are remunerated on an ad-hoc basis after completing an agreed-upon task, in this case, replying to messages. When asked if they have any employment protections, they both expressed the same sentiment:

Sally

“Uh, nothing. No and they can fire you like that.”

Cassidy

“And they can terminate you at the drop of the hat if they want to.”

They both express the core tenet of platform mediated precarious work; that they are dependent on the platform for income but the platforms have no long-term labour obligations to them. Unlike standard-work, where workers are at least temporarily protected from abrupt changes in the demand for their labour, Sally and Cassidy would in theory be immediately unable to generate an income if demand suddenly fell. Both Sally and Cassidy at some points were completely financially dependent on their respective platforms. Although both participants reported that their platforms always paid them for all the work they had done on time, there is no long-term security. All platform mediated gig workers are classified as independent contractors, despite the reality that for many of them, they are performing the functions of an employee, without any of the benefits associated with full-time employment (Wood et al., 2016). When asked if there were any specific employment conditions she had to follow while working as a chat host, Sally expressed the following;

Sally

“You have to book as many shifts that you could, and if you didn't book enough shifts, that means obviously you weren't going to get the work... They used to like, say to you to please pre book your shifts and sometimes you would just book a few now and then, but you could always go and free work if you know when I say free work you could just join anytime. But you had to book certain amount and you had to do that.”

In the above passage Sally illustrates Wood et al. (2016) sentiment that although she is never considered an employee of her platform, she still has to meet minimum labour requirements. To Sally, this work meant that she was able to meet her basic financial needs throughout her 18 months performing online erotic labour. Cassidy echoed this sentiment: during a period of unemployment, she became completely dependent on her platform, but was also able to meet her basic financial needs through this work. Their ability to meet their basic needs was cited by both as a major mitigating factor to their experience of precarity. Although the nature of platform mediate labour creates individual experiences of precarity, platform mediated labour can allow workers to transcend their national economic conditions (Graham et al., 2017: 137).

Sally

“I actually, you know what? I'll be honest, I was just grateful I had a way to earn money.”

For Sally who had previously experienced a prolonged period of unemployment in the larger context of mass South African unemployment, platform labour allowed her to transcend the constrained economic conditions of South Africa. For Sally her experience of labour precarity was located within a national labour context. Sally's experience highlights the tensions between the increasingly globalised nature of digital work and national economic conditions. At the same time that platform mediated gig work can provide relief from macro-economic conditions on an immediate level it is still inherently insecure for workers.

A contributor to gig workers sense of precarity is their lack of access to employment protection, such as sick leave. If a worker is not continuously actively working, they will not be generating any income. When asked if he found anything challenging about the flexible nature of earning money from OnlyFans, Stanley answered:

Stanley

“Yeah, it is. It is a bit like challenging sometimes, yeah, especially like for example, like if I'm sick, I don't work. So I'm not making content so and there's not like you get

like sick days. You know. ... Actively making content. I'm not making money. Which is a big downside.”

In this passage Stanley clearly illustrates the experience of ‘flexi(nse)curity’ inherent in gig work (Vlase & Preoteasa, 2021). A common sentiment among all the participants, excluding Sally, was the major benefit of platform gig work as the ability to flexibly work and earn money. Unfortunately, this flexibility comes at the price of workers being able to know they will meet their basic needs every month. Stanley’s account is set-up using a monthly subscription model which can produce mixed results. A monthly subscription model can give a small level of certainty about how much they might earn each month. On the other hand, this means that if he goes a prolonged period without posting people might unsubscribe from the account, hurting subsequent months’ earnings and customer ratings. A general feature of a multitude of customer-facing gig work is the interchangeability of the worker. Customers purchase a service from a specific platform (such as Uber) that they purposefully choose, but the service provider (the Uber driver) is incidental to that purchase. As Stanley further elaborated his experience of being unable to work, he said the following:

Stanley

“I remember like there was a time I was like sick, like for a month and I didn't make content that entire month. But luckily like I had, like loyal subscribers like there's always like those few loyal subscribers that like they will ride with you and they will die for you. Like through thick and thin so like if it wasn't for them I might probably would have been suffering that entire month.”

In this passage Stanley describes a distinct advantage of content creation gig work. The nature of the content creation means that clients form attachments with the creators. Stanley has developed a relationship with some of his clients where they are not only invested in his content but also his overall wellbeing. The analysis of the participants experiences of platform mediated precarity has drawn on commonalities across chat hosts and erotic content creation, but this experience is unique to content creation. Much like platform mediated gig work is not monolithic neither are my participants experiences of different types of erotic labour on different platforms. Platform mediated labour tends to distance workers and consumers, but the emotional labour and relationship building online erotic content creation requires helps mitigate precarity. As discussed in the above chapter although emotional labour can be the most taxing aspect of labour it can provide respite from the institutional effects of platform mediated precarity.

The transition from standard to non-standard work has resulted in the shifting of risk from the employer onto the worker (Vallas & Schor, 2020). Workers take on an economic risk to be able to sell their labour. When asked if they needed any equipment to be able to work as chat hosts Cassidy and Sally both said they needed a stable internet connection and a laptop equipped with a webcam to attend meetings with the site managers. When asked about the upfront costs involved, Sally said the following:

Sally

“So like my laptop, somebody loaned it to me. It wasn’t mine, somebody loaned me a laptop and then the Wi-Fi obviously had to get that sorted out. So that was the only real cost involved.”

The platform mediated work model has created a system in which the platform acts as a third-party facilitating the supply of labour and consumer demand. Platforms purposefully restrict their workers from gaining information about clients to stop them from selling their labour directly to them. This model is clearly demonstrated through Sally and Cassidy’s respective experiences of the different chatrooms. I have not included the names of the sites on which they were employed to ensure their anonymity.

Sally

“And I don't remember naked photos of woman being on there? Like for you to send but it was just like of, of women like either at home or, you know, like clean photos.”

Cassidy

“...lets say they want BDSM<sup>5</sup> then you get that picture of that Lady is all in the black sexy thing with a whip, so then the pictures that are on her profile will be all of her.”

If the client is presented with a website where the stated goal is to meet people to potentially date, like Sally’s website was, the images the website used were more less sexually explicit, whereas on Cassidy’s website that was advertised as being explicitly sexual, the images were more graphic. Although they both had some idea of how the chatroom was being advertised to the clients, they do not know the exact websites the clients are coming from. This third-party mediation of the flow of messages allows the company that owns the website to have control of the customer pool while stopping potential workers for directly selling their labour to the customers. Both Sally and Cassidy repeatedly stated that chat hosts face immediate dismissal if they share any personal details with clients. This experience is distinct to my chat host

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<sup>5</sup> Bondage Domination and Sado-Masochism

participants because of their anonymity on the sites, they are not able to generate income from satellite work connected to their erotic labour. Erotic labour that forms direct connections with clients can aid workers in generating income from that personal relationship that have to their clients (Berg, 2021:135). The trade-off for anonymity when performing online erotic labour makes each worker easily replaceable for the client. The disconnection between chat hosts and their clients is directly constructed through the architecture of chatroom platforms. The experience of replaceability for the chat host participants is not echoed in a one-to-one manner with the experiences of the content creating participants as demonstrated further up in this section. The experience of the content creating participants for them their disconnection from clients is created in a more covert manner, algorithmic control.

A common feature of most platform work is algorithmic-based reputation systems. On most platform systems workers are rated by clients by various measures and in turn, the platform's algorithm aggregates these scores with other platform-based metrics to create ratings. Workers with high ratings will be prioritised in the search results and algorithmic recommendations (Wood & Lehdonvirta, 2023:1001). The algorithm-based reputation systems that regulate workers' ability to sell their labour are 'inscrutable-by-design'; in other words, it is not always clear what is causing you to fall down the algorithm (Loi, Ferrario & Viganò, 2021). Reputation systems give clients an unprecedented ability to discipline a worker who does not want to conform to their demands (Wood and Lehdonvirta 2023:1001). If a worker's rating falls, the algorithm will send them further down the search results making it harder for potential clients to discover their account. These reputation systems and real-time client reviews which are commonplace in multiple platform-based jobs can increase a worker's sense of precarity (Wood and Lehdonvirta 2023:1001). In order to prevent clients from leaving them poor reviews, workers might have to appease clients at the expense of their own boundaries. When asked about how he enforces boundaries with clients, Stanley disclosed:

Stanley

"It's it's very difficult to navigate and also like you have to think about it in the sense of if I say no to this person, are they going to now make a post about it and be like oh, this person is so rude, don't like subscribe to the page..."

As Stanley illustrates above each interaction with a client becomes a never-ending cycle of constant negotiation and re-negotiation. Due to the fact that every interaction a worker has with a client has the potential to considerably damage their profiles site ranking hampering their ability to grow their client base, or result in formal discipline from the platform such as their

account being suspended. Platform mediated work removes the standard-working interaction of having to report to an overall boss, but what that singular interaction is replaced with is several micro-interactions with multiple clients acting as micro-bosses (Berg, 2021:136). However, this experience of algorithmic precarity was not universal for the content creating participants. When Dahlia was asked if she was concerned about potentially receiving a negative rating for enforcing boundaries with clients she said:

Dahlia

“Umm, no, I think that for me the most important person in the scenario is myself. Obviously, I care about customer satisfaction for the people that are respectful, but I don't care about somebody who doesn't respect my boundaries. ... But if you're somebody that's gonna get turned off by my content because I I'm enforcing boundaries, there's probably isn't the place for you anyway.”

As Dahlia attested despite the fact that receiving a negative review could have a potentially detrimental effect on her rating it is not beneficial to her to compromise her boundaries. Strictly enforcing boundaries is in some-part a privilege owed to not being completely financially dependent on her erotic labour but it is also essential to sustaining long-standing position in erotic labour. A negative review in this context act as a self-selecting determined for a specific client base in a way it would not within other platform mediate gig-work.

Until this point the participant experiences of platform mediated precarity have been congruent with other platform mediated gig workers. Having said that, a unique contributor to people engaging in online erotic labours' experience of platform mediated precarity is the stigmatisation of sex work and erotic labour. There are relatively few sites for people to sell their erotic content to clients so workers are especially dependent on them to facilitate their labour (Easterbrook-Smith, 2023). When asked why Dahlia uses OnlyFans as opposed to other sites to sell her content, she responded:

Dahlia

“Honestly, it was the only one that I really heard about at the time, and I think at the point that I did start discovering other content platforms, I was so comfortable being on the OnlyFans platform that like it was honestly just a laziness thing. ...I was like ohh my stuff is here. Like I've built up a following here. I've built up, you know, like a little community that I have going and kind of moving would. I'm just guess kind of ruined that momentum, so I just left it.”

In the above passage Dahlia outlines the reason she chose to use OnlyFans and why she continues to use the site. Here Dahlia indicates one of the fundamental dilemmas for erotic content creating platform workers - they are reliant on a platform for their income. Gig work is often billed for the flexibility that it offers workers allowing them to sell their labour on multiple different marketplaces depending on their needs, but in reality workers are usually reliant on one platform (Hamilton, Barakat & Redmiles, 2022:13). OnlyFans as a platform censors' workers from tagging/advertising their accounts on competitors' platforms (Easterbrook-Smith, 2022). This means that if a client does not follow the worker on social media, they will not be able to see if they create a new account on a different platform. In response to this, workers will either have to rebuild a following on a different platform, sacrificing some of their current clients, or they will have to operate several accounts on different platforms. OnlyFans currently has mainstream recognition that similar sites do not have, which means workers will have a wider customer base already built into the site (Easterbrook-Smith:2022). However, a drawback of this popularity is that the market is now saturated with other workers.

Dahlia

“I think that there are sites more well suited to adult content creators, but I just I didn't have the the lis [sic: desire] to move.”

Dahlia also touches on an interesting feature of platforms unwillingly becoming associated with stigmatised work. Although OnlyFans has become a cultural shorthand for pornographic content, the site imagines itself a platform for 'traditional creatives' to sell their content (Van Der Nagel, 2021:406). The platform consistently distances itself from the sexual commerce that they facilitate, Van Der Nagel (2021) demonstrates through analysing OnlyFans corporate blog that the site invisibilises all of the sex workers using the site. Even the terminology the site uses in their terms of service distances them from the backbone of their site, erotic labourers. Using the terms creator and fan instead of worker/performer and client creates a veneer of creative respectability (Van Der Nagel, 2021:405). The distancing the site does from its adult content demonstrates that erotic labourers are not secure. In August 2021, without any prior warning, Onlyfans announced they were going to ban all explicit content from there site. After creator and public backlash, they swiftly reversed that decision (Van Der Nagel, 2021). When asked if he had ever experienced challenges withdrawing his earnings from the site, Karl responded:

Karl

“I think maybe like a year ago or something or like early early 2022, maybe like the end of 2021, there was a big like like uproar about like like OnlyFans wanted to change their whole model to like to, to restricting adult content and like everyone was like, what the fuck like, this is why you're famous, you know, like like, like adult content creators or or or, like sexual content creators or whatever. Like they built this platform before you, you know, like like the only reason you make any money off of this is because of that ... So there was this whole big thing where like, they because they couldn't, they couldn't get any, they couldn't get any, uh, working partnerships with banking systems. They basically try to like change their whole model so that banks would partner with them.”

Many people who were dependent on their OnlyFans revenue were almost instantly locked out of their source of income. OnlyFans’ decision to ban adult content came as a result of banking systems refusing to partner with them due to the stigmatised nature of sex work.. This points to the globalised nature of both the gig economy and anti-sex work stigma– workers who do not exist under a specific legal system are still subject to them. These laws are usually made by global North countries and enforce neo-colonial rule on generally global South countries (Tichenor, 2020). As a result of pressure from its banking partners, OnlyFans shifted some of its policies around content moderation. As a result, a variety of content (usually content that does not fall within the strict boundaries of normative heterosexual sexual expression) became more heavily policed and prohibited (Hall, 2021). When asked if he felt the platform had changed since he first joined it in early 2020, Stanley had the following to say:

Stanley

“The platform definitely did take a bit of a shift. Especially in terms of like guidelines and you know, just the rules that they had, it's it's just totally different.”

When probed further about what he meant by this he replied;

“Just like they were, just like really open in the beginning like. Like for example, if you were into let's say feet fetishes, for example. Like that was like so okay for you to post that, but now [it's not].”

Content guidelines are purposely opaque, meaning that workers are never truly sure if they are breaking the rules when they post. Workers are forced not only to restructure their content depending on the current guidelines but also to try to discern what future guidelines might be. Due to the fact that sex work and erotic labour is stigmatised platforms that facilitate this kind of labour can shut down or dramatically change their terms of service without consulting the

people who would be most negatively affected by these changes without facing any legal or even social repercussions. It is this wider structural context of anti-sex work stigmatisation that informs the experiences of the participants explored below.

## Experiences of Stigma

This chapter focuses on the participants' experiences of stigmatisation of erotic labour. The participants' stories highlight the stigmatised nature of sex work more broadly which overlaps with the stigmatisation of online erotic labour. This chapter will also explore how the participants navigate and resist this stigma through creating positive meanings and creative means of negotiation. It is evident that a great deal of people hold deeply stigmatised views about all forms of sex work and erotic labour (Weitzer, 2023:35). Any form of directly commercialising your sexuality as immoral and deserving of punishment. This is clear from the following story that it is a sincere belief that if people become aware that you have performed erotic labour it will damage your life. This is clear to see in Dahlia's experience of her erotic labour being outed to her family. After asking Dahlia if she had experienced any stigma because of her erotic labour, she recounted this story.

Dahlia

“I also actually at the beginning of doing OnlyFans had somebody who found my content and sent it to my family and that was I think the one thing that I was kind of worried about. ...so it definitely felt like a revenge thing because I think he signed up, used a fake name, didn't get any personal content, but bought one of the packages that I had made.”

A member of the community who had recently been accused of sexual assault by someone independent of Dahlia. He held Dahlia responsible for these accusations becoming public knowledge. In an act of revenge, he found her OnlyFans account and sent it to her family. His choice of outing her to her family reflects that he believes performing erotic labour is; something one should be ashamed of and something one should be punished for.

Dahlia

“Umm, I kind of was already on very rocky terms with them, but they did message me and in the same like message of judgment of I can't believe you're doing this. I can't believe you're selling your body. They will also like if it's a money thing, will give you money. We just don't want you to fall down this hole of porn and drugs. And I was like, I don't do drugs. Like what you're talking about?”

In this quote Dahlia details the experience of her family finding out she is performing erotic labour on Onlyfans, after she was outed as performing erotic labour. Prior to this happening she was already somewhat estranged from them because of their opposing value systems. “, ... I was already kind of the family disappointment...”. At the time she was not living with any of her family and was completely “emotional and financially” independent from them. She describes family as being “...conservative Christian, like right leaning...” it follows that they would have conservative moralistic views that understands any sexual commerce as being inherently morally wrong. From Dahlias family’s perspective female sexuality should only be expressed with normative moral confines. Normative morality conceptualises acceptable female sexuality as being monogamous, non-commercial, heterosexual and within the confines of a marriage (Zatz,1997). Her family also make an offer to financially support which on its own can be viewed as an offer of kinship support. However, in this context it is clear that it would be a means for them to control her, because she was already independent from them the only control that could exert would be re-establishing a financial dependence on them.

Dahlias family mention the idea of engaging in erotic labour as ‘selling her body’ which is a widely held belief. The phrase ‘selling your body’ is only evoked when discussing erotic labour which demonstrates an implicit belief of Dahlias family that to exchange sexuality for money diminishes her humanity and control over her body. Her involvement in erotic labour is cast as an existent to her body sovereignty and sense of self. It is also indicative of a worldview that ‘exceptionalizes’ erotic labour in comparison to all other labour making it incomparable to anything else, meaning they cannot understand it as being a different form of work (Davis, 2014). It is also a logical fallacy; most people exchange their bodily labour for material benefit under capitalism. This excerpt also reveals a worldview that inextricably links erotic labour and drug use. Erotic labour is often understood to be immoral as is substance use so the two cannot exist without the other, her family present a philosophy that contravening one condition of the normative moral order has to result in further immorality. The symbolic image of the ‘porn star’ creates the characterisation of Dahlia as a ‘bad women’ in the minds of her family (Voss, 2015:4). This excerpt demonstrates that the public stigma against erotic labour conceptualises it as being an existential threat to the worker. The idea of ‘the damaged good hypothesis’ is also present in her family’s perception of erotic labour (Polk & Cowan, 1996). They can only conceptualise her involvement in OnlyFans as something she has been driven to out of desperation. Dahlia’s perceptions of her engagement in erotic labour was not impacted by the fact her work is legal, this indicates that anti-sex work stigma is not purely correlated

with its legality. When Stanley was asked what he thought the general public perception of sex work was, he stated:

Stanley

“People stigmatise it in a public sense more for because, like the general consensus of sex work based on like just histories like, it's like immoral or it's like this negative connotation. But honestly, like most people watch porn and actually enjoy, like watching people have sex, that's just the reality of it. So I think like, it's a I think it's a catch 22. I think people are just like. ...Very conservative about it and I kind of scared to be open about. Yeah, like, I love watching OnlyFans or I love watching porn. Like, I think people's, like, just scared to say that, to be honest.”

In the above excerpt Stanley reflect on how he feels most people perceive sex work and workers, specifically in reference to pornography. To Stanley the reason people generally express anti-sex work sentiment is because the normative morality of society is anti-sex work, creating a mutually reinforcing system of normative morality. Individuals reproduce anti-sex work stigma because public consensus is anti-sex and individuals do not want to be perceived as going against public consensus therefore public consensus remains anti-sex work because individual perception is anti-sex work. The fear of being seen as morally deviant is what makes people distances themselves from being thought of as consumers of any sexual commerce. There is an attached stigma by association for people who openly resist anti-sex work stigma.

Stanley

“So yeah, it's it's quite tricky to say, to be honest. I think people do love it, but like. And people like do support it, but they also wouldn't say openly that yeah, I support it or yeah, like it's cool.”

This quote from Stanley reflects the ‘immorality paradigm’ of sex work, people inherently feel sex work is immoral and taboo so it is very difficult to challenge that idea. Because the ‘immorality paradigm’ is so deeply felt and taken for in society individuals will pre-empt considering any other perspectives that they will automatically default to the idea that sex work is wrong. The common public perception that sex work and pornography is wrong can be considered a folk belief, something people do not need any evidence to believe. To most any kind of erotic labour holds an intrinsically immoral quality that does not require any evidence to see (Ericsson, 1980:338). Stanley’s quote also reveals something very interesting about normative morality surrounding sexuality, people will consume and enjoy pornography while

still firmly believing its morally wrong to create it. When asked why anonymity was so important when it came to her involvement in erotic labour Sally replied;

Sally

“Yeah, it was important that nobody knew because people will still judge you. They don't care that you can't eat, that you can't pay your rent and you this or whatever.”

In this passage Sally alludes to the core tenant of the immorality paradigm of conceptualising erotic labour, that is there is something inherently immoral about it. The taken for granted nature of the idea that you should not engage in any kind of sexual commerce obliterates people's ability to think about it pragmatically. Often individual decisions about engaging in erotic labour are influenced by economic necessity, in the same way engaging in any kind of dangerous or precarious work does. Both contact and non-contact sex work can exacerbate economic precarity because of the stigmatisation attached to this form of work. When asked if she worried about the potential affect her OnlyFans work might have on her primary source of income, online teaching work. Dahlia expressed her concerns:

Dahlia

“But yeah, I think it is something that people always do worry about just because you never really know what your employers stances and mixing sex and like and like their employment that you have is like, it can be scary I think. concerns about her online teaching job finding her OnlyFans account.”

She further explained:

Dahlia

“ I have heard of stories. No one I know personally, but I have heard of stories of people losing their job once. Somebody once their employer, finds out that they are and OnlyFans worker.”

The stigmatisation of sex work even legal forms leave all people engaged in any form of erotic labour vulnerable. For someone who is known to have performed erotic labour engaging in straight work<sup>6</sup> can face substantial challenges. These include workplace harassment and unfair dismissal if they are recognised as a sex worker, in spite of the fact the erotic labour they were engaged in is legal (Berg, 2021:102). Cassidy, the only participant who had engaged in contact sex work,

She

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<sup>6</sup> Non-sex work economic labour

Within the South African context anti-sex worker stigma is widely researched amongst contact sex workers, numerous studies have documented sex workers experiences of physical and sexual violence from clients

Although all of the participants indicated a wider societal sentiment of stigmatisation against erotic labour, their personal experiences of stigma also varied noticeably. As unpacked in the theoretical orientation of this research and echoed by all of my participants online sex work/erotic labour is stigmatised but the participants did not experience this uniformly. This difference in experiences of stigmatisation can be best understood by employing the theoretical orientation of this research the society of constraint<sup>7</sup> (Folbre, 1994). Both stigma and agency exist on a continuum that is dependent on the position of an individual in the overall social hierarchy. When discussing with Stanley if he had ever experienced condemnation when people found out about his erotic labour, he said the following.

Stanley

“To be honest. No, and ja I would say like like I said earlier like I think like for queer like I like I want to say I'm lucky in a sense that I don't want to say lucky 'cause that's I don't feel like that's like word. But I would say, like I'm privileged in the sense to like, come off as like, if someone like looks at me in the street, they're like, oh, he's just like a heterosexual guy, you know, like he's just heterosexual. So it's like, whatever. ...I think idea of like if guys are like smashing 20 girls, it's like that's amazing dude. Like well done. You know, it's kind of like a pat on the back.”

In this passage Stanley recounts his experience of people finding out he is an erotic performer. Due to the fact he is perceived as a heterosexual man his erotic labour is read through the lens of hegemonic masculinity. His perceived straightness insulates him from stigma because it is seen as an expression of normative male sexuality. By expressing his sexuality in this way Stanley is not perceived to be contravening the established social order. Stereotypes about heterosexual male sexuality shield Stanley from experiencing a higher degree of stigmatising. It is also important to note that it is automatically assumed that Stanley is performing in a heterosexual manner despite the fact that his client based is largely men. When asked to expand on what factors he thought would influence other people engaging in erotic labour experiences of stigma he replied;

Stanley

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<sup>7</sup> Theory of the society of constraint has been explored within the theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

“You know, I definitely think it [being perceived as straight] has a major role to play, to be honest. I think it was even just like a more feminine male doing it. They would be like a negative connotation. 'cause. It's like, oh, like 'cause. Like, there's also, like, a stigma against, like, feminine queer people, like, just that they're like. Like especially like for example like feminine gay men like, there's just this thing that they oh, they're so thirsty, they just, you know, they just want attention and they just like. So I think it definitely does be a massive role.”

In the above passage Stanley illustrates that individual experiences of stigmatisation are created by the intersection of multiple different identities. The degree of stigma that is experience is linked to the norms the that dictate someone’s social status and prescribe social role (Bettio, Giusta & Di Tommaso, 2017). It is the overlapping nature of holding multiple stigmatised identities that create individual experiences.

Despite each participant reflecting the sentiment that online erotic labour is stigmatised they each found ways of either navigating or resisting it. For all of the participants this mean either partially or completely concealing their involvement in online erotic labour. Every participant discussed strategies that they have put in place to conceal their erotic labour to others in order to protect themselves from anti-sex workers stigma. For most, the concealment of their erotic labour was because of its stigmatised nature not because of their own feelings towards their work. When asked if she disclosed her erotic labour to others Dahlia said the following:

Dahlia

“But if somebody asks, I will always be very open about it because I don't think that there should be a stigma around sex work. I don't think that it should be anything to be ashamed of.”

In this quote Dahlia illustrates that to her the anti-sex work stigma she has experienced has been external to her own self-perception. Although this quote reflects a great deal of privilege as she does not fear interpersonal or state violence as many sex workers do, it also shows that erotic labour is not something that inherently damages someone. The immoral paradigm that informs anti-sex worker considers all erotic labour to be shameful and existentially dangerous to self-hood, it is not. People can engage in erotic labour and have positive feelings about themselves and their labour, there is nothing inherently degrading about online erotic labour nor full-service sex work. When asked how he felt people perceived sex workers Stanley said the following:

Stanley

I think if I'm in my bedroom alone and I'm on my laptop or on my phone or at a desk. I love sex workers. They are like everything to me.

As Stanley beautifully illustrates in this quote although many people will not publicly express their support for sex workers it does not mean it does not exist. Sex workers and the people who care about them are everywhere. Due sex workers are forced to act with hidden economies and conceal their erotic labour due to stigmatisation, they are very much a part of the fabric of our society. "Sex workers are everywhere. We are your neighbours. We brush past you on the street. ... Although we are everywhere most people know little about the reality of our lives." (Smith & Mac, 2018:1). On a feminist academic level, it is only through the increased creation of research that respects and values sex workers experiences.

## Conclusion to Findings and Analysis

The above '**Findings and Analysis**' describes the participants experiences of performing online erotic labour. The chapter '**Experience of Labour**' specifically highted the ways in which they experienced and navigated their labour. The participants experiences of the labour is correlated to the kind of erotic labour they were performing, although the intragroup experiences of emotional labour were nuanced. The chapter '**Platform-mediated Precarity**' demonstrated the commonalities the participants experiences of platform-mediated and those of other platform-mediated gig workers. The stigmatised nature of erotic labour created a particular kind of platform-mediated precarity that is unique to the experiences of people performing online erotic labour. The chapter '**Experiences of Stigma**' further explored the participants experiences and understanding of anti-sex work stigma as people performing online erotic labour. Their individual experiences illustrated the nuanced nature of stigmatisation. Although each participants reflected a wider stigmatisation of erotic labour and sex work, they also demonstrated through incidents in their own lives how to actively resist that stigma.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research sought to provide a more comprehensive understanding of online erotic labour from the perspective South African engaged in erotic content creation and chat hosting, using the lens of sex work inclusionary feminism. This study is located within the emerging intersection of feminist research on sex work within the broader context of platform-mediated gig work, a significantly under explored landscape. As has been argued, this is important because of the increasing control labour platform have over the individual worker labour and the increasingly precarious nature of work. I argue that this is especially true for workers who perform online erotic labour the structural stigmatisation of the labour and their identities.

This research has a relatively small sample size so any overarching narratives about the fundamental nature of online erotic labour cannot be drawn, the creation of grand-narratives is fundamentally opposed the theoretical framework and research paradigm this research is located in. This research has created a nuanced picture that is situate within the particular experiences of the participants. this research has also not endeavoured to uncover any insight into the fundamental nature of platform-mediated gig work or universalise the research participants experiences of their platforms. What this research has hopefully achieved is providing a 'sensuous' account of the participants experiences of their 'Experience of Labour' through an exploration into the practical and emotional labour performed by erotic content creators and chat hosts. The participants individual experiences of their labour were heavily correlated to the type of erotic labour they performed. 'Platform-mediated precarity' locates the individual experiences of online erotic labour within the wider context of gig-work and platform-mediated labour. This research has shown how the stigmatised nature of erotic labour and platform mediated precarity coalesces, creating a distinct category of platform-mediated precarity. It is this stigmatisation that informs the 'Experiences of Stigma', the participants experiences of stigma and navigation of this stigmatisation aims to shed light on how online erotic can creatively navigate and resist anti-sex work stigma.

This research sought to contribute to filling gaps in both feminist and gig work research, in a global context but especially so from a global south perspective in an African context. This research acts a bridge in the literature about South Africans experiences of online erotic labour. Developing a more nuanced understanding of erotic labour as a whole. Although it is not within the purview of this research the legal decriminalisation of full-service contact sex work in South Africa will contribute towards a material improvement in conditions of erotic labour.

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## Annexture

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide

These questions will only be used as a guide not a questionnaire, each question serves to gather data relating to the above-mentioned research questions. As the interview is semi-structured and open ended in nature, these questions are not exhaustive and participants are encouraged to direct the conversations. The below question only serves as a rough guide to encourage consistency amongst the interviews.

Do you consent to continue the interview?

Do you consent for me to record the interview?

#### **Life history**

1. Profile of participants: Basic demographic information
  - Name: What name would you like me to call you during this interview?

- Gender: What pronouns would you like to use during this interview?
  - Age: How old are you currently?
2. Background
    - a. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself growing up?
    - b. What was school like for you?

*Transition*

3. When did you first enter into the job market?

**Paid work history**

4. What paid work have you previously done? Can you describe the work briefly?
5. How do you experience your previous work?
  - a. What was enjoyable or challenging about the work?
  - b. What influenced you to change work?

*Transition*

6. What influenced you to enter into online sex work?

**Labour of online sex work**

7. Basic profile of the erotic labour
  - Length of employment: How long have you been engaging in online sex work?
  - Time of entry/exit: What year did you start doing online sex work? What year did you exit the industry (if relevant)?
  - Platform: What websites do you work on? What websites do you use to sell your content?
8. Decisions relating to platform: Why have you chosen to use this specific platform?
  - a. What is specific to this platform that has made it desirable to you?
  - b. What is the process that goes into you using this specific platform?
  - c. Have you used other platforms before? If so for how long?
  - d. Has the type of work that the platform is designed for affected your decision to use it?
9. What equipment do you need in to produce your content?
  - a. What of that equipment did you have when you first started? Did you buy any of it specifically to start making content?

- b. To you have a specific space dedicated for your work?
10. What type of online sex work do you perform?
- a. How would you describe the type of work that you do?
  - b. What does a typical work day look like for you?
  - c. What are your basic working arrangements?
    - i. What is the daily average time you spend working?
    - ii. What is the average level of effort and stress involved?
    - iii. What is the basic framework of you receiving payment for your work?
    - iv. How do you decide what content you are going to produce?
    - v. Do you work alone? Do you have anyone else you employ? What do you employ them to do?
    - vi. Do you have any other sources of income? Can you briefly describe them?

*Transition*

11. How publicly visible are you in regards to your online sex work? How much contact are you in with the general public?

**Lived experiences of online sex workers**

12. Is privacy/anonymity a concern for you?
- a. What is the process you go through when deciding on what your boundaries are?
13. What are the safety practices that you implement specifically because of your work?
- a. What practices do you implement in the online space?
  - b. What practices do you implement in the real-world?
14. What is your experience of being an online sex worker?
- a. What are aspects you find challenging or enjoyable about it?
  - b. How important does this work feel to you?
  - c. Are there any insights you've gained about the industry from you time being a part of it?
15. How much do you disclose to others about being an online sex worker?
- a. How much would you disclose to general person?
  - b. How much would you disclose to someone you have intimate ties with?
16. What do you think people's general perceptions are?
- a. How do others perceive the online sex work industry?

- b. How do others perceive online sex workers?
17. How true are these perceptions to your own lived-experiences?
18. Why do you think these perceptions exists?
19. What effect do you think these perceptions have on you?
- a. Safety and security
  - b. Inter-personally
  - c. Economically
  - d. Mentally
20. Is there any advice you would give to someone who is thinking about starting online sex work?
21. Are there any other points you would like to raise that we haven't spoken about yet?

### **Closing**

Thank you so much for your time, I am very appreciative of all the insights you shared with me.

## Appendix 2: Participant Information sheet



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

You are invited participant in a study conducted by me, Tegwyn Megannon, a Master's student in the Department of African Feminist Studies at the University of Cape Town.

Email- [mgnteg001@myuct.ac.za](mailto:mgnteg001@myuct.ac.za)

### **Why is this study being done?**

I am doing this study to investigate the lived experiences of online sex workers to build a better understanding of the unique situations you experience and how you navigate them. This study is specifically looking at how you understand and navigate the labour of being an online sex worker and how you understanding and navigate the stigma related to online sex work. This project is being carried out as the research portion of my master's degree in African Feminist Studies at the University of Cape Town.

### **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to take part in this study because you have indicated that you might be interested in being a participant in this study. In order to be a participant, you need to be over the age of 18, be a South African or reside in South Africa and have performed any kind of online sex work. Your story is important to this research and your lived experiences would provide valuable insight into an under researched topic.

### **Do I have to take part? Can I withdraw?**

You don't have to take part in this study, your participation is completely voluntary. You can also withdraw your information from this study after the completion of the interview but before the completed dissertation is submitted. If you choose to withdraw for any reason all of the data and insights you have given me will be removed from the dissertation and all of your data will be destroyed. You don't have to give a reason for wanting to withdraw from this study.

### **What will happen to me if I decide to take part?**

This study will consist of 1 approximately 60 minutes interview on Microsoft Teams between you and I. I will send you a link to the meeting through your preferred choice of communication. If you need data to join the call, I will provide it for you. I can arrange more time to provide additional information or opportunities for sharing information, should you feel after interviews are completed that you would like to speak more.

### **What will happen in the interview?**

The interview will be a conversation between me and you about your experiences of being an online sex worker. The interview will be looking at how you experience and navigate the labour of online sex work, such as discussing your understandings and processes around creating content. The interview will also look at how you experience and navigate any stigma surrounding online sex work. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to and we can take breaks whenever you want to.

### **Are there any benefits to taking part in this study?**

This research will offer you an opportunity to share and reflect on your experiences of online sex work in a non-judgemental and anonymous space. Currently there is very little known in an academic context about online sex work and your participation in this study could help to fill this gap. Through building a better understanding about online sex work could help reduce stigma and add to a body of research that could influence positive changes.

### **Are there any risks to me if I take part in this study?**

The topic of sex work and the sharing of experiences of encountering stigma may be a sensitive and personal area for you to speak about which could trigger difficult emotions for you. You can refuse to answer any of the questions or end the interview whenever you choose. Although it is never the intention of me or this study to upset you as a participant it may happen. I will use all of my experiencing in interviewing to help navigate these difficult feelings should they arise; I have also included the contact information of NGOs that can provide you with further counselling.

SWEAT 24-hour Helpline- 080 060 606

The Trauma Center- 021 465 7373

### **How will my information be kept private and confidential?**

Any information you share during this study that could possibly be used to identify you as a participant will be protected. All the information you share with my will be pseudo-anonymised. This means that the names of any people, places, or other identifying characteristics about you gathered during the interviews will be given pseudonyms (fake names). You will not be identifiable as a participant of this study. Your contact information will only be known by me and will never be passed onto anyone else.

The interviews will be recorded, you will have to the opportunity review/edit the interview should you wish to. Only you and I will have access to the recordings, I will not share them with anyone else. All of the recordings and notes will be kept on a password protected laptop or in a locked drawer. The interview, transcripts and all of my notes will be kept for 5 years and then destroyed. The transcript of our interview will be edited to remove all of the information that could identify you. You will also be sent a copy of the transcript so you can remove any information from it you don't want included in the study. The edited transcripts will only be viewed by me and my supervisor Dr. Yaliwe Clarke. The interview material will be used, presented and analysed within my Master's dissertation and might also be published as academic articles or reports.

### **What happens if something goes wrong?**

If you feel that I have behaved in an unethical way and would like to make a complaint you can do that by contacting my direct supervisor Dr. Yaliwe Clarke at [yaliwe.clarke@outlook.com](mailto:yaliwe.clarke@outlook.com) or the Head of the African Feminist Studies department Associate Professor Fatima Seedat at [fatima.seedat@uct.ac.za](mailto:fatima.seedat@uct.ac.za) . If you feel that your complaint has still

not be handled adequately you can contact the Dean of the Humanities Department Professor Shose Kessi at [hum-dean@uct.ac.za](mailto:hum-dean@uct.ac.za) or 021 6503 059.

## Appendix 3: Participant recruitment poster

# Call for Research Participants!

Are you an online sex worker?

Have you created content for OnlyFans?

Have you sold erotic content?

Have you earned an income from webcamming?

Have you ever worked for an adult chat room?

Have you ever sold erotic pictures or videos of yourself as an income?

**Research Study  
Exploring The  
Experiences of  
Online Sex  
Workers**

**Participation Requirements?**

- You identify as someone who has been or is an online sex worker
- You are above the age of 18
- You live in South Africa

**Who am I?**

I am a master's student at UCT in the Department of African Feminist Studies working on a study about the lived experiences of online sex workers in South Africa

**What does being a participant involve?**

Participation in this research study would involve an online interview of about one hour. All costs involved will be compensated for. Your involvement in the study will be strictly confidential. We will ensure you remain anonymous and private.

If you want to find out more, please email me at [mgnteg001@myuct.ac.za](mailto:mgnteg001@myuct.ac.za) or WhatsApp 