

## **The Waves of Activism: An Ethnographic Study of Sex Work Activism in Dublin and London**

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### **Abstract**

How women tell their stories is changing. Women deemed sexually transgressive, from the Magdalene laundries to the #metoo movement have struggled to make their voices heard and believed in the public sphere. A third wave of feminist activism (Gillis and Munford 2004; Aune and Holyoak 2017, Cox 2014, 18) of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century then presents with an alternative framework. This new wave of activism is less reliant on non-governmental organisations to campaign and mediate women's stories and more inclusive of the diversity present in the category of gender and its associated roles and implications. This project tells the stories of one group of these women – sex work activists in Dublin, Ireland and London, England. While much research has been conducted on both the numbers and experiences of those in the sex industry, little attention has been on the women as activists, who have campaigned in their personalised approach to highlight the harms and resist the laws that govern sex work and prostitution. This essay is an ethnographic qualitative study and so the research questions focus on the journey of sex work activists, the consequences, and opportunities of their involvement and whether they are adequately representative. In addition, it also explores the role of digital activism within the 'third wave phenomenon', creating a possible global solidarity among the activists which is seen to be an urgent need to bridge the gap between academia and raw activism.

**Keywords:** sex work activism, gender and deviancy studies, law and health.

### **INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY:**

The proposed research project aims to examine how the sex work activists of Dublin, Ireland and London, England understand, experience, and negotiate the concept of activism. It investigates shared and divergent experiences of women facing structural (e.g. racism, caste, economic precarity, religious) and personal (e.g. stigma, shame) constraints that both challenge and embolden their sex work activism. Through it I basically wanted to identify the various tools and methodology in use for the continuity and survival of the activism in question and whether it has an impact on the concept of identity, self and power dimensions of not only the social system at play but also in the daily lives of the activists themselves. This project further explores the potential of third wave feminism and the 'wave phenomenon' (Gillis & Munford 2004; Aune & Holyoak 2017), that seeks to platform feminist debates within digital space, to create a global sex work activist solidarity. My proposed research question then is How sex worker activists of Dublin and London, understand, experience, and negotiate activism? Accordingly, the project is shaped by the following sub questions:

1. How do the stories of sex work activists of Dublin and London, including their histories and strategies, further expand our understanding of third wave feminist activism?

2. Whether a global solidarity through the 'wave paradigm' could be witnessed primarily in the digital space?

The study is conducted purely along the module's qualitative method of analysis as it provides me with the platform to perform a detailed and in-depth analysis of sensitive behavioural representations and emotions. The research questions focus on the journey of sex work activists, the consequences, and opportunities of their involvement and whether they are adequately representative. In addition, it also explores the role of digital activism within the 'third wave phenomenon', exploring a possible global solidarity among the activists which is seen to be an urgent need to bridge the gap between academia and raw activism (Vijaykumar, Panchanadeswaran & Chacko 2019; Pai, Seshu & Murthy, 2018).

The proposed methodology for the research is an ethnographic qualitative study (Marcus, 1995) with an essence of comparative causal analysis (Ragin and Strand, 2008) under the constructivist methodological position that allows for an interpretive and logical approach. The qualitative discourse analysis provides me with the necessary tools and space to conduct my research as it aims to produce rounded understanding based on rich, contextual, and detailed data. It has the capacity to capture changing attitudes of the targeted population and provides a more flexible approach in including factors that might not necessarily be a part of the original objective. (Mason, 1996).

The basic theoretical orientation for the proposed study is from the Foucauldian (1975) explanation of power and knowledge as I am of the view that the concepts of identity creation within the triangular nexus of power, politics and media could be effectively explained through his analyses. However, other prominent sociological standpoints are also taken into consideration like the feminist discourses of Butler (1988), Atwood (1985) and Plummer (1990), and behavioural presentations of self from Goffman (1959). In addition, I have a relativist ontological position as I attempt to construct new forms of knowledge by presenting the findings and its associated analysis in collaboration with my participants. Accordingly, I had an interactive/transactional epistemological position that assisted me in detangling the complex web of interconnections and provide me with a greater access and a more complex understanding of the collected data (Mason,1996).

I had initially decided to use participatory action research (Ponzoni, 2015) for my research, but I had to change it to participant observation and online measures under the current covid regulations (Johnson, et.al., 2011). I have conducted a purposive and snowball sampling design wherein I have done an in-depth semi-structured interview schedule as it allowed for the generation of additional themes (Mason, 1996). It helped me put myself in their shoes and see the world through their very own lens which was of great aid while arguing my case. Moreover, through the application of in-depth semi-structured interview schedule, I was able to generate certain themes that was not a part of my initial objective. This in turn presented me with an opportunity to contrast and analyse between the dominant theoretical underpinnings and the ground realities. The validity of the collected data is contextualised using participant observation and contextual research analysis. The epistemological framework employed contradicts the notion of relativism.

I also collected various secondary data available from sources like private diaries (Harvey 2011), notes, books, video diaries, pictures, articles, tweets, blogs, podcasts, or any other source of written information. It greatly assisted me in supplementing information that I was

not able to procure during the interview along with providing me access to people who were not available for a direct interview. I had initially decided to conduct my interview in a face-to-face manner as it would have provided me with an opportunity to meet the concerned person and build a good reputation with the person but due to the self-distancing regulations for covid-19, I was forced to conduct all my interviews through the digital platform like skype or zoom. Although, it was successful in providing me with adequate rich and detailed data (Sturges & Hanrahan 2004).

The primary access was gained through my supervisor Dr Paul Ryan as he is actively involved in the proposed field, but the succeeding contacts was accessed through a snowball technique. It proved to be very effective for me as gaining access in the times of covid where most of the activists were actively involved in fighting for the rights of equal benefit for its workers was quite challenging. It then eventually forced me to widen my field study to neighbouring England. It proved to be quite beneficial for my analysis as it allowed me to verify and critically retrospect the global solidarity in the face of differences claim by the third wave sex work feminist campaigners. The consent forms were sent through e-mails, prior to the date of the interview. In addition, a verbal consent was also taken for keeping a recording of the conducted interview. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, utmost care and precaution was taken in matters of security of the collected data as all files were kept in a single folder with password protection and after the data was transcribed the recording was deleted from the digital platform. During the interview I had also engaged in an active discourse of non-participant observation to make my data collection more reliable and valid.

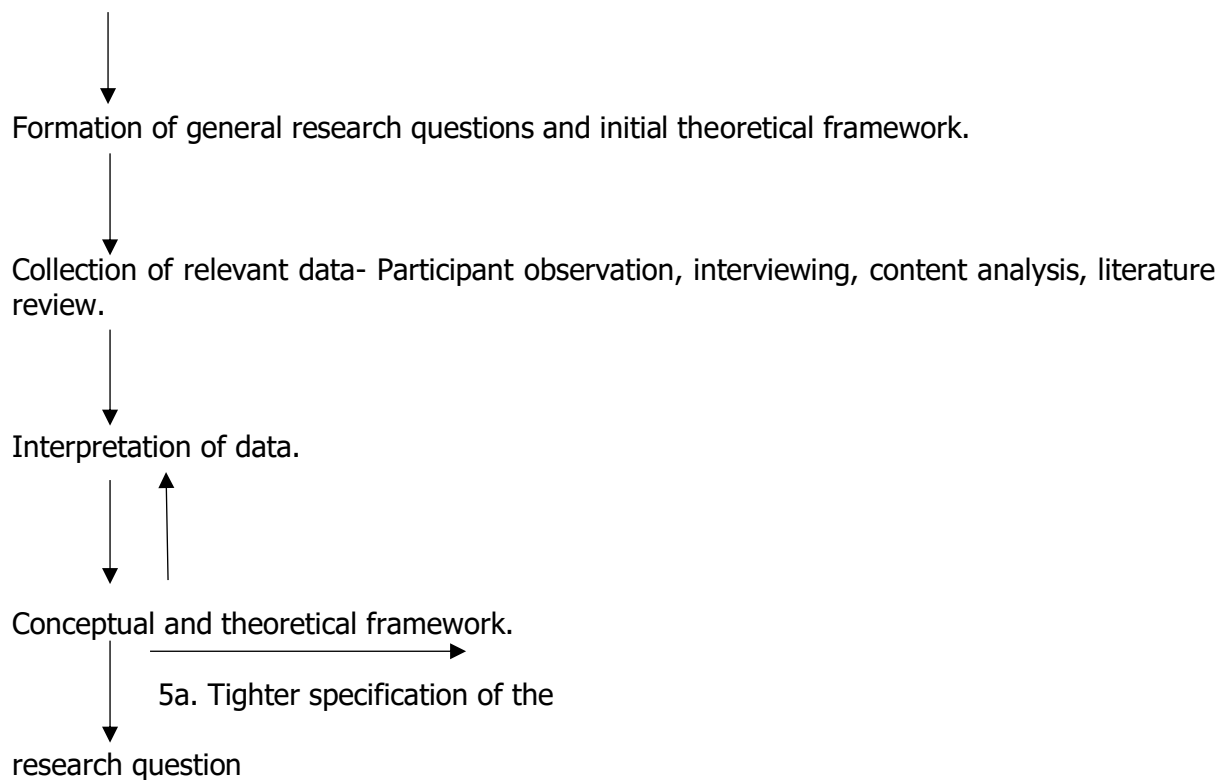
I have further employed an interpretivist critical approach of analysis as it allowed me to analyse the collected data intricately and sought a balance between theory and practise (Mason, 1996). The transcripts of the interviews were constructed manually as the software called TEMI that is popular for recording interviews and generate transcriptions automatically, could not be utilised as it operates only when recordings are conducted in a face-to-face manner. The manual transcripts then were supposed to be colour coded through the application of MAXQDA but due to the lockdown measures of the government we were not able to learn the use of the application in the proper manner and although extra online classes were provided to familiarise ourselves with the software, I was not confident enough to use it for my research.

So, all my transcripts were manually colour coded through the guided techniques of our research professor Mary Benson. After all the sections of the transcripts were categorised into different codes and sub-codes based on a specific colour, the themes that generated from the data itself, proved to be the basis of my understanding and analysis. Coupled with the themes that I was able to generate from the study of my literature, the analysis of the findings attempted to weave together the dominant academic discourse on sex work activism along with grass root understanding of the concept. It contributed towards the wider discourse of the 'wave paradigm' of feminism and sex work activism through the explanations of the proposed research objectives of the paper.

Although the aspect of objectivity is most problematic in any kind of research especially in a rich and sensitive qualitative research like the proposed project, utmost precaution was taken against any form of biasness at each stage of research formulation (Mason, 1996).

An outline of the steps taken in this qualitative research project is drafted as such:

Initial contact with the sex work activists and other activists who work in this field.



Write up findings and conclusion. (Figure adapted from Bryman, 2004: 269)<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1 presents an outline of the steps undertaken during the research process. While working on the proposed field and gathering as much information as I could, I started to familiarise myself with the field and the participants that I have sampled to be included. This had a huge impact on the questions that I had formulated for the study and the aims and objectives that I had decided to be included in the research. I began by formulating general research questions to develop an initial theoretical framework. It greatly assisted me in narrowing down on what the objective of the research should be and what do I wanted to document. All my interviews were recorded and transcribed after which it was effectively coded, and sub coded into the following thematic representation.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS:

The sex work activists of Ireland and England were found to be in perfect synchronization with the particularistic traits of the third wave feminist activism of contemporary times. They wanted to break the monotony of the dominant dual discourse of victimization versus empowerment debacle surrounding the discourse of sex work activism by introducing an alternative pathway wherein being 'girly' and 'feminine' was enough to be considered equal and dignified. They rejected the ideology of the prior second wave feminist discourse where 'being beige' and rejecting the bright colors of the rainbow or sparkles was a necessity for equality and to be taken seriously. Much like the LGBTQIA movement, the sex work activism forum too has personalized all the glam and glitter to fight the war against stigmatization and discrimination. Quotations like "*You are sexy as fuck, just as you are*" and "*You are*

<sup>1</sup> Pg 201. Benson, Mary. Methodology chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Davina, Lola. December 15, 2018. Blog.

*marvelous, and You are enough*<sup>3</sup>” portrays the importance of ‘self-love’ in both sex work industry and contemporary digital activism debate. The following sections chalk out the various categories in which the sex work activism discourse of Ireland and England pans out. The first section traces the life history and the background of all my participants, which is then followed by the various level and degree of stigmatization that they must endure during their journey. Next is the segment on gender and the process of production of knowledge surrounding sex work discourse, which is then finally followed by a section of power dynamics and how that play a role in the lives of the sex work activists.

The data collected from the participants allowed me to code and sub-code along two primary categorisations. So, under the wider umbrella of Activism, we had:

- Life Story further categorised into-
  - Sex Worker
  - Academic
  - Community
- Stigmatisation further categorised into-
  - Class
  - Migration
  - Violence

### **Broken in prostitution or brokenness into prostitution?**

The life course of the individuals that eventually led them towards the path of activism is crucial towards understanding the push and pull factors. I argue that it is only through a critical analysis of the motivation, an effective and long-standing middle ground could be sought which do not intends on universalisation of experiences or understandings but strives on individual personal experiences (Aune & Holyoak 2017; Cox 2014, 18; Downing, 2011; Plummer, 1995). These minute personalisations could then be forming a wider whole which is identified as the digitalised feminist third wave phenomenon in the contemporary context (Gillis & Munford 2004; Tahmina and Moral 2000, Jeffreys 2009; Snowden and Majic 2014).

### **Sex Worker Activist:**

I would like to commence on this journey with the statements of a sex worker activist as this was my first interview and it also formulated the base of my knowledge by allowing me a peep into the world of sex work activism. For instance, my first respondent Ava, who is a practising trans sex worker and an activist from Dublin, recalls her journey into prostitution and activism in the subsequent way:

*"My journey towards becoming a prostitution campaigner or a sex work campaigner started with uh my mother taking a drug she was prescribed during pregnancy called Stillbestrol (DES) as a very concentrated dose of estrogens and it was prescribed to over 10 million pregnant women over the 30s to the 70s and was prescribed for women who has a history of still births and miscarriages. So, because, my mother was on that drug, I believe I was born inter-sex and uhmm when you are born intersex, uhmm you are basically measured the genitalia of the baby and decide then which side to place it in and do surgery uhhhhh to follow.*

*I was molested by, my dad would have men over when my mother was away at work and I was molested by him and his friends uh, you know so it was, I was just constantly being*

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<sup>3</sup> Davina, Lola. January 23, 2019. Blog.

*beaten and uh I grew up kind of like Cinderella in the house. So, uhm I didn't spend a lot of time at home really and I started uh into sex work pretty early. So, uh it it was like, I don't know, I guess now it was always inclined towards sex work. So, I would basically go home with people and uh they would uh give me money, give me a place to stay and in exchange for sexual favours and uh I did a little bit of street work but it didn't really turn out that well for me and uhm in 1992 I, immigrated to America cause in America was the only place in the movies where I saw people like me.*

*So, uh I moved to New York. I was engaged in sex work uhm to an extent and then uh I had children and my wife and I really struggled and I worked pretty hard on trying to maintain a veneer of heteronormativity for the children and uhm I went back to the closet, I uh I tried to provide them the most normal childhood I could cause I was a single parent and uh of twins so. But when they turned eighteen, I felt that I was kinda would be cowardly for me not to at the time we had a tattoo shop in rural Texas and it was a very religious area and all that and you know KKK and all that stuff. But I figured if I do not come out I am a coward so I uh came back out and uh as a result I am still tattooing people but uh a lot of people ah my clientele had dropped way down.*

*You know, I was I was in a Martial Arts Organisation for a long time, I was kicked out of that, a lot of them stopped having anything to do with me. So, uh I resorted back to sex work and uh my wife is a sex worker also and we were basically just doing sex work together and uh making films, doing phone sex and uh with the dawn of Trump we just decided we have to start gearing out of America. I could not access health care over there or anything and so they were trying to push through so many anti-trans laws like there were trying to pass a bill that would have made it illegal, a crime for me to use my bathroom in my own tattoo shop."*

The systematic violence and stereotypical discrimination that the respondent was subjected to during her early years and which eventually led her towards prostitution is clear from her account. It was sometimes visibly conscious like the times in which the participant was molested by the father and his friends or being called an abomination. It includes unconscious violence like changing the genitalia at birth so that the child falls into the societal accepted duality, contributes towards forming a mindset that influenced the decision to participate in a trade as an escape route. This routinised systematised violence and discrimination then is a result of a complex intersectionality which mostly comprises of patriarchal social system as the dominant trait (Bhasin, 2004).

The discriminations and associated violence that comes with patriarchy is seen most prominently along the female sex and anyone who does not fall into the dual social categorisation of sex and thus, gender. Since, the participant was an inter-sex sex worker, her discriminations due to her hierarchised position in society was many folds (Bhasin, 2004). First, she is discriminated for being an inter-sex person, then for being a sex worker and then for belonging from a low-class working family. Moreover, the strong inter-relation of power, religion, gender, and choice of profession (Foucault, 1975) seems to have eventually forced the individual to migrate for better opportunities. But, even in the country which seemed more equitable by comparison was seen to be following a universal global paradigm of patriarchal norms (Stryker, Owens & White, 2000; Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Lundin, 2019).

In situations like this, the brief period of acting out as a normal couple (Goffman, 1959) for the sake of the twins seems like a last resort taken by the participant to normalise situations for the benefit of the family and create an escape route from the routine harassments and systematised discriminations that often turn into physical and mental violence (Sultana, 2015;



Jenness, 1993; Blissbomb, 2010; Jeffreys, 2009; Weitzer, 2008; Anspack, 1979). But the secret that eventually gave her a moral guilt for hiding her true self could be debated along the lines of the primary characteristic of the third wave feminist discourse in which the affected would not only like to speak about themselves but would also like to be actively involved in publicising their troubles and work towards eradicating such 'social evils'(Plummer, 1995; Gillis and Munford 2004; Aune and Holyoak 2017; Downing, 2011; Cox 2014, 18).

### **Academic Activist:**

The second way to approach the life course discourse is through the lens of the academics who made a conscious and informed decision of being involved in activism and fight for the rights of the targeted population. The reason behind the decision could be many folds but for the proposed research I would be venturing only into the possibility of choice and interest as the basis for deciding to be an activist. The following statements are in association with academic activist called Nora from Dublin who did her post-doctorate from Maynooth University. It traces how her life course approach has resulted in her and other fellow academics decide in become a campaigner for prostitution rights and privileges.

*"I began researching in sex work or prostitution research, because when I began researching, the term sex work didn't really exist in such. Particularly in Ireland. It all really stemmed from work I did in my own Masters in Applied Social Research in Trinity College and that was back in 2004. And I got to spend some time in the health research board, and I worked in the drug misuse research division. So, it was really from there. There was kind of a very narrowed focus I had in the beginning because say for stereotypically male drug funding behaviour maybe could be breaking or entering or could be robbery. For females, and this would-be hard drug use obviously, the issue of prostitution was coming up again and again. It was often tied to survival sex and we could see a pattern just by looking at some of the research around it.*

*And what really struck me was there was very very little known about prostitution in Ireland. Everything that I was reading around was international. There were few micro-studies and local small-scale bits and pieces. But it was so sporadic, and I was thinking "Ghosh! This area is ripe for exploration. We know very very little about this". And it was a learning curve for me as well, from my own personal perspective. Because as I was reading, I was learning. I was being challenged around my own preconceptions around sex work and prostitution. The kind of stigmatising of those involved in sex work. Not just in public discourse, but also in kind of traditional ways of producing knowledge about sex workers.*

*So, it kind of fostered my interest from there and I just got really excited about learning more. So, following my Masters, I went on to undertake my PhD. So, I was exploring the experiences of prostitution in Ireland. I decided that was the best way to start because we knew so little. We had to be exploratory. It had to begin at the beginning of beginning and just trying to piece a picture together. You know, how did people experience their work? Did they see it as work? How did they identify it? or How did they talk about it? So yeah, from then on following the PhD, I was able to develop out my work in terms of positive action from the research. So, advocacy work and I was involved with Chrysalis as a volunteer, doing street-based outreach. Following my PhD, well I took on a post in Maynooth. So, I started off in a post-doc position in Maynooth. So that took me in a different area of research, but I continued on with my connections and outreach with Chrysalis and at that time, the Sex Work Alliance of Ireland was kind of in an embryonic stage. So, I was involved in kind of the beginning with the meetings with other likeminded individuals, with academics, with service providers, with sex workers themselves who were interested in trying to form something of a group, representing*

*sex workers rights and advocating for rights and safety and well-being of sex workers. It kind of took a while to get it off the ground and as I said I was going in different areas with my own research, so by the time it was more formally established, I suppose it was a little further down the line and I became involved in that then."*

It could be stated that the journey of an academic activist is very different from that of a sex worker activist due to the presence of agency in the decision. While for the sex worker activist fighting for the rights and respect of the sex workers was a matter of prerequisite necessity for survival. For the academic however, it was a conscious and sensitive decision that was taken for the overall benefit of the community. It is not to say that the academic is not able to adequately represent the situation of the targeted population as it is only through the voices of such academics the ground reality of the sex working community is made visible to the people in power (Foucault, 1975). In addition, they too must face a different level of stigmatisation from sometimes their fellow peers who might be supporting a different ideology or from other dignitaries or civilians of the society who associate anyone involved in the 'industry of sin' to be unworthy of equal dignity and respect. Instances like my supervisor being attacked and being called names from a fellow activist having a difference of opinion seems to be a perfect example of the type of alternative and hidden stigmatisation that one section of academic activist might have to face in their daily lives.

The need for bridging the gap between raw activism and academia then seems to be even more crucial than (Vijaykumar, Panchanadeswaran & Chacko 2019; Pai, Seshu & Murthy, 2018) as the biggest irony of any society is that even if all the social movements, including feminist movements have been against the prevailing patriarchal systems, it is only through these same social-legal amendments, one can expect to initiate changes in any society (Barry, 1995; Plummer, 1995; Tahmina and Moral 2000; Kabeer 1989, Stryker, Owens and White 1992). But this could also be easier said than done, especially in a country like Ireland or England as Catholicism, nationalism, and patriotic desire for political stability of the newly formed independent nation-state created an institutional conservatism and authoritarianism in Irish and English politics and society (Connolly & Hourigan, 2006; Tovey & Share, 2000).

The need for a better representation that was sensitive to the minute personalised experiences yet being a protagonist in the wider feminist debate (Vijaykumar, Panchanadeswaran & Chacko 2019; Pai, Seshu & Murthy, 2018) was felt by the respondent herself with her statement, '*little known about prostitution in Ireland.*' The case for third wave digital feminism seems to be even more significant than as it challenges all the prior approaches of conceptualising sex work and sex work activism as it intends to break away the dominance of the judiciary and jump into community-based knowledge creation mostly through the digital platform (Tahmina and Moral 2000, Jeffreys 2009; Snowden and Majic 2014).

The concept of collective identity has emerged in the field of social movements as a tool for examining the social injustices that are translated into the everyday lives of collective actors. The base proves to be 'devitalizing' emotions such as shame, anger, fear, and depression. An attempt is made then to elicit positive 'vitalizing emotions' through establishing solidarity with people having similar mindset (Stryker, Owens and White, 2000). The community based sensitive and gendered creation of knowledge could be made possible and accessible to a large group of people only through widely popularised outreach programs and mass mobilisations conducted by various organisations like SWAI (Sex Workers Association, Ireland) or English Collective of Prostitutes in the U.K. Both the organisations, however, are more inclined towards the pro-professionalization of sex work and demands equal respect and decriminalisation of a sex work primarily through the digital platform. But there are various other organisations too like Ruhama or the TORL (Turn Off the Red Light) campaign who



support the Nordic model and seek for abolition and criminalisation of sex work (Connolly & Hourigan, 2006; Tovey & Share, 2000; Sloan & Wahab, 2000; Snowden & Majic, 2014; Jeffreys, 2009).

But, from the data collected for the study, it was witnessed that the prominence of the professionalization of sex work was very strong in the ground level which was filled with people from the industry and other likeminded individuals and academics who support the cause and believe in backing up with the demands and visions of the people who are affected instead of acting as a representative. The Nordic style abolitionist campaign was seen to be quite vivacious among the people in power and thus, had a clear dominance in the wider popular discourse. Ranging from the media to judiciary, the bureaucracy and even certain sex worker turned activists and academics, were in clear support of the Nordic style model which supported a complete ban on prostitution, pimping and other related activities. The primary reason behind upholding a 'victim' standpoint for anyone involved in prostitution is because they consider all the sex workers to be forced into the business as the business is considerable to be degradable and the people involved to be morally wrecked that the matter of choice even as a means of survival is completely negated. Thus, all the people involved in the trade is victims who are devoid of any agency and are exploited by the men who run this operation for easy and quick money.

Through various of the tweets from on their most prominent activist Rachel Moran like '*Metropolitan Transportation Authority: Tell the NYC MTA to remove ads promoting prostitution! - Sign the Petition! <http://chnng.it/5knFfXfK> via @Change<sup>4</sup>, 'Great to see Irish Judge declare the suggestion that a woman sustain herself via prostitution "egregiously offensive to the inherent and natural human dignity of women"<sup>5</sup>, 'No matter how many times I see it, it still sickens me to watch women promote prostitution as viable for \*other\* women, yet erupt with indignation when asked if it'd be suitable for themselves. You weren't owed an apology Laurel, and it's you who owes an apology to all women.<sup>6</sup>' and 'I know the day will come when the middle-class students, academics, politicians & so-called feminists of Ireland will be shamed for what they've condoned here. In the meantime, no-platforming sex trade survivors for highlighting it is a new low @TheUSI'<sup>7</sup>; very clearly portray a strong association with the first wave feminism of sex work discourse in Ireland politics (Barry, 1995; Plummer, 1995).*

However, since it is a qualitative sociological study, I am in no position to argue any approach regarding sex work in a black or white frame as it is the grey area that any sociological study, including the proposed research is more interested in. So, instead of arguing with which approach provides a better understanding of the contemporary sex work scenario, I too would like to adopt the primary characteristic of the third wave feminism and try to approach the subject in a more neutral manner.

### **Community Activist:**

Before divulging into the complexities of the neutral paradigm to sex work discourse, I would like to present with the life course approach of the third form of activism which is the community activism through the statements presented by Nicole, a former sex worker turned

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<sup>4</sup> March 7, 2020. @Rachel Moran. Twitter.

<sup>5</sup> February 20, 2020. @Rachel Moran. Twitter.

<sup>6</sup> February 5, 2020. @Rachel Moran. Twitter.

<sup>7</sup> November 24, 2019. @Rachel Moran. Twitter.

activist from London by inaugurating a community outreach program and authoring a self-help book for sex workers and attempts to describe the reasons and associated mechanisms behind such a decision.

*"I started out as a sex worker almost 30 years ago now. I started as a stripper. This was back when I was 22 years old and I stripped for a couple of years. I did it in part because I was curious about it and part because the money was very very good. And from there, some of the women that I met, while stripping, they introduced me to other avenues of sex industry, including professional domination. I made a couple of porn videos at that time and then finally I landed on full-service sex work or escorting and that's where I really landed. I ended up doing that for 3 and a half years. I ran away for about 7 years and I came back to it for about 4 years. So, I like to say that I did sex work for about 8 years over a 15-year span.*

*So, I had been out of the sex industry for almost a full decade. Again, doing full-service escorting when I was 36 years old. I stepped away from it for a lot of different reasons. I did not have to, I got married, different things happened, and I guess it took me about 10 years to think about the experiences and digest what happened. Everything that I had seen and everything that I have thought about it and somewhere in my mid 40s I was thinking about writing a book about sex work and personal finances. I wanted to offer that as a, I wanted to become a somebody who would offer financial advice to people who are doing sex work.*

*And I sat down and it was I guess over a course of two or three days, I wrote the outline for the first book that I wrote, 'Thriving for sex work' and I realised that there were all these things that I wish I had known when I was younger. There were all these advices that I felt that I could say as an older person, as a person in their 40s. So, the first book I have to say came really as a flash of inspiration, but also just as a recognition that there was no self-help book for sex workers that I was aware of. That I just felt like there was a need that community had."*

The above statements portray the life story of a sex worker turned activist who decided to address the mental health issue of the sex workers by providing them with guidance and advice that would provide them protection from harm and violence. Since she did not really identify herself to be either on the side of the abolitionist or of the pro decriminalisation of sex work, her approach could be considered as an ideal prototype of what a third wave feminist discourse have been propagating about a middle ground. As seen in her statements it is quite clear that her case is a perfect culmination of both the sex worker perspective of activism; due to her long journey in the said profession and the academic perspective which became prominent when she decided to leave the profession and write a self-help book.

It, however, also portrays a very strong depiction of the necessity of maintaining a dual life due to the social distancing maintained by the by the 'civilians' of the society between the two realms of 'us' and 'them' (Stryker, Owens & White, 2000; Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Lundin, 2019). The uncomfortableness witnessed in the statements of the participant while discussing about the 'various reasons' that led her to leave the profession, justifies the difficulty faced by a third wave feminists who might believe in the ideology of commodification of the body and emotion to be not necessarily destructive, (Blissbomb, 2010; Jeffreys, 2009; Anspack, 1979) and attempts to manage the associated stigma (Goffman, 1963) through certain personalised defensive manoeuvres (Anspack, 1979; Goffman, 1963). The trouble acknowledged to handle and accept this 'new self' (Anspack, 1979; Sultana, 2015; Jenness, 1993) is seen to be due to the age-old conflict between mind and body that is brought exhaustively by Sociology of Emotions (Hoschild, 1983).

In addition, the skills that was acquired during her journey of being a sex worker or an escort or a stripper was seen to be immensely applicable in her later life. Her own personal journey of hardships influenced her to write a book which discusses about the systematised violence she had to face in the industry and provide guidance towards the management of physical and mental health while critically yet shrewdly controlling the dominant patriarchal social systems. It publicised the importance of 'doing gender' as it is only by aligning their persona with the socially accepted dominant notions of femininity, that they can create a blanket of deceive wherein, power dynamics is manipulated under the shadow for their benefit (Blissbomb, 2010; Jeffreys, 2009; Anspack, 1979; Weitzer, 2008).

The acute similarities that could be drawn from the experiences of a prostitution campaigner from England with campaigners from Ireland, represent the possible bond of global solidarity that the contemporary activists desire and strive for. Through primarily the digital space the ability to form universalisations without necessarily clouding the unique personality traits and diverse characteristics and opinions is exactly what the new age feminist activism is striving for. The third wave feminist discourse on sex work is again seen to be prominent then as the participants encourages her followers to use femininity as a tool to fight against the repressive patriarchal norms (Plummer, 1995; Gillis and Munford 2004; Aune and Holyoak 2017; Downing, 2011; Cox 2014, 18). Instead of being in complete visible opposition against the dominant societal notions, the respondent talks about using personalised femininity as a tool to manage power relations by being within the system and pull out a smartly crafted 'quintessential con' (Blissbomb, 2010; Jeffreys, 2009; Gillis & Munford, 2004; Aune & Holyoak, 2017).

### **What's a nice girl like you doing in a job like this?<sup>8</sup>**

Goffman (1968) defines stigma as "any physical or social attribute or sign that so devalues an actor's social identity as to disqualify him or her from 'full social acceptance'- an attribute that is deeply discrediting." <sup>9</sup> He identified three main types of stigma which were having physical defects or any bodily deformity like being a cripple, a dwarf or deaf; personal weakness or blemishes on a person's character or background such as prison record or being unemployed; and social stigmas due to type of company a person keeps or the racial or religious groups s/he belongs to like ethnic minorities. <sup>10</sup>Stigma may therefore be ascribed (something you are born with) or achieved (something you earn). Different implications inevitably follow for the stigmatised persons depending on whether the stigma is visible or not (Slattery, 2003).

Stigma is found to be ubiquitous in sex work and is documented in multiple studies of sex work. But stigma associated with sex work and sex work activism could be considered as a social stigma that results in the blemish on a person's character. So, the difficulty that arises with Goffman's definition of stigma while addressing the core concepts of sex work activism is that although it is a compelling analysis of the key dimensions of stigma, nothing is mentioned about the associated resistance, nor over the possibility of its reduction or elimination. Goffman and the other founders of labelling theory are of the view that once an individual or a group of people is stigmatised in a particular manner it becomes permanent and internalised which is seen to be quite true for a section of the cases. But the aspect of the same stigmatised individual managing its stigma effectively through a variety of defensive

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<sup>8</sup> English Collective of Prostitutes. February 2019. 'Nice Girl Report'.

<sup>9</sup> Pg 185. Goffman, Erving. Stigma.

<sup>10</sup> Pg 186. Goffman, Erving. Stigma.

manoeuvres like concealing, selective revelation, isolation and coping with 'spoiled identity' which is conducted quite routinely is completely ignored (Weitzer, 2018).

The very reality of stigmatisation faced periodically by both the workers and the activists could be witnessed from statements made by one of my respondents Karolina from Dublin that, *"even though America, uh sex work is fully criminalised there is a lot less stigma. Ireland has so much stigma and uh lot of the reasons the old laws of Ireland is still valid today uhm like one of the reasons the mental health uh is so poor in this country is due to the stigma"* and *"when there is no stigma we can stand up and go without fear of consequences, without fear of eviction, without fear of destroying any hope of them getting employed anywhere else when they can go up and say "I am a sex worker and this is what we are doing" you can't count our numbers."* The following section is hence, dedicated towards a critical analysis of the data collected from the respondents of the study in which the aforesaid perspectives and arguments would be tested and explained. The category of stigmatisation is further subdivided into Class, Migration and Violence subsequently as these themes were generated from the transcripts and I believe they would be able to venture into the complex and intricate web of social inter-relations while discussing about the conceptualisations of systematised and routine stigmatisation faced by sex work activists of Ireland and England.

### **Class:**

In Marxist theory, society consists of two parts, the economic base, and the superstructure. The base consists of the forces and relations of production in which the people enter to produce necessities and amenities of life. Whereas, the superstructure consists of the various cultures, institutions, political power structures, roles, rituals, duties, and state-system. While the relation of the two parts is not argued to be unidirectional as the superstructure also has an influence on the base, it is nonetheless established that the economic base is more significant and predominant. Marx and Engels did warn people of such economic determinism wherein, economic relationships prove to be the foundation upon which all other societal and political arrangements in society are based (Marx, 1867; McMurthy, 1973). The statements provided by my participants from both Ireland and England, aptly represents Marx's prediction of the predominance of economic determinism in extreme capitalist societies is seen to have come true, most specifically in the context of sex work activists. For instance, a former sex worker turned activists from Cork called Ella provided with the following statements, *"people from working class areas generally don't get to college to get the qualifications they need to enter such professions. I think only 7% of the area that I grew up in compared to 90% in more affluent areas."* and *"We do it for survival. Poor people have no other option so they having the babies and pushing them towards sex work. If I had a choice I wouldn't choose this um same for people who are insulting, resorting to having sex work as a last option."*

In addition, there is a community-based sex worker from Galway called Karolina who reported that, *"we do this because of economic reasons, because of lack of housing or child care or I am currently in college and am paying it through sex work which has become much more difficult, having being evicted by the police. Like when I saw how these kids were treated, I it was so different and so comfortable compared to mine and uh so for me I never, like it has always been scrambling to survive you know."* and a London based sex worker turned activist called Grace said that, *"the brothel owners are so bad and exploitative in running the brothel that they decide to work together to essentially fight together against the even upper upper echelon of people. Thereby, sort of exposing that the issue is actually more class related than gender related."*

All the above statements clearly indicate that economic position of the family could be considered as one of a strong push factors for a person to advocate for sex work from a very early age as it is envisioned as one of the easiest ways of earning a quick buck and escape the misery of poverty. The level of poverty and ascribed stigmatisation (Slattery, 2003) that is brought forth just for the mere reason of belonging from a particular class structure of a hierarchised society is seen to be enough to motivate the affected individual to scavenge for a faster and more accessible escape from this systematised and invisibilised 'mess'. Statements conveyed by Nicole like, "*poverty is coercive, if we are to talk about people who are having the worst time in the sex industry, we have to talk about why they ended up there? and also why is it an industry that has such potential for exploitation? and those are structural problems with the way that the world is run*" is a clear indicator of the grave economic status of the participants. Much strongly represented from quotations like 'survival sex' or 'last resort' is a clear indicator for Marx's economic determinism playing out in the society in which the economic society is determined via work-leisure constraints, social selection and mapping (McMurthy, 1973).

Although, it is not to say that there was an absence of agency and choice while making the decision towards becoming a sex worker but what I am arguing here is about a critical economic retrospection of the agency of the concerned decision. I am of the view that the stigmatisation and discrimination that comes from belonging to a particular class, especially the lower rungs of society, could be one of the strong impediments for the individual to try and discover the quickest escape route. In the case of the sex workers and the sex work activists, the escape route is prostitution or other related activities like stripping or escorting or becoming a dominatrix that provides them with the much desired and longed feeling of the power of empowerment.

### **Migration:**

The issue of migration that is heavily inter-related to several concepts especially economic hardship faced by the individual, again due to numerous factors is the second theme that emerged from the transcripts. It is yet another factor that motivates individual to choose sex work as a profession due to the shroud of secrecy, titillation, agency, quick and easy approach of earning good money and excitement that is provided by the industry. The following statements depicts the grave issue of sex work migration in the country of Ireland and England, their status in the country, the difficulties, and multiple discriminations that they have to face in their day-to day life and the strategies that are utilised in order to manage and comprehend their source of living in a foreign land.

For instance, Bella, a practising sex worker and activist from Dublin reported that, "*When I moved to Ireland in 2008, I was doing other kinds of work when I first moved here. But in 2013, I was sick of being poor and I missed doing the work and so I started working again. I have met workers at this point from a lot of different countries, from Romania, from everywhere.*" and "*I have been involved with where students might be involved in sex working again to fund their studies and keep them going through college. We see that again in lot of the international evidence. sex workers who maybe migrants, who maybe here working in sex work and who feel that if they are, if they reveal what they are doing, that they would make themselves known to the authorities where their situation is already precarious if the legalities aren't in place. So they may feel that they may risk deportation and their families aren't aware of what they are doing and so on.*"



Again, yet another community-based sex work activist named Sophie from Limerick said that, *"our organisation helps migrant sex workers helped them from an angry mob on the streets that were throwing stones at their homes and braking glasses and when the Gardi showed up, they thought that they would protect us and but we had basically to fight the Gardi to make sure that they are protected"*. In addition, Lucy an academic sex work activist from London was of the view that, *"People who are new to where they are living and don't have connections or resources to have a job. In those cases, people find themselves doing sex work because they have to. There are around 800 to 1000 prostitutes here that are going on in the profiles online. Of them 96% are migrant women. The majority being from the Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe. Most of them live in a grey area where they are told that they would be able to go on with their normal lives like keeping on with English classes or any other classes or any jobs and they would be beyond prostitution. It would be kind of like a temporary job for a much better future. But they had no idea what they were getting into because they didn't know that they would be 7 nights a week in a flat intimidated, passports taken away, being used by as many men as the pimps can possibly get through the door and they will never see the inside of any of the English language class."*

A clear indication of economic status is seen as being the motivating factor for an individual to escape the variety of conflicts and dilemmas of their homeland and migrate to a society in the aspiration for a better livelihood. This then results in a considerable influx of poverty ridden individuals, especially from East European countries to a more affluent and opportunity rich global city like Dublin or London. As stated above 96% of prostitutes are migrant that have travelled to Ireland, especially Dublin in the search for knowledge of particularly the English language along with sustainable modes of earning quick and easy money. As agency and flexibility of migrant population, including full-time students who struggle with their fees and other expenses seems to be significant for them, sex work seems to be the most viable option. Moreover, as stated above extreme cases of violence and trafficking horror stories of poor youths is seen to be quite scarce. It determines that migration in the sex work industry, could be considered as mostly a voluntary and conscious decision. Another crucial pull factor in the context of migration is the world of glitz and glamour that is popularised effectively in the prostitution business primarily through social media platforms, beauty magazines or word of mouth. Through comments given by one of my respondents Emily from Dublin, like *"I would see sex workers in movies about New York and uh, trans-people and they were not treated the way that I was treated here. So, uh I moved to New York"* clearly indicate the power of consumerist culture and the impact that it can create (Marx, 1867).

The other crucial argument is of the routine violence that the migrant sex workers and activists must face from the Garda due to the various laws in place and due to the fear associated of being deported or sentenced to prison due to lack of proper legal documents. This leads them to never report any of the crimes or violent encounters that might have occurred during their work. They would rather prefer to face the discrimination and violence and bear its consequences then ask the Garda for any form of assistance, just because of the aspect of fear of being stripped of their permanent source of income. Statements given by practising sex worker turned activist, Ava from Dublin like, *"I knew that I had no kind of legal protection if I were raped or robbed by one of my clients. So there was always that fear"* and *"One of the person I talked to having mentioned earlier was raped and afraid to go to the law enforcement uhm was in that situation because her roommate was to be evicted through these laws and she was forced by the law to work by herself and got raped and was afraid to contact police"* depict a clear indication of fear of police or any individual from power. It sometimes also leads to an absence of confrontation from the police or any rehabilitation centres as their prime intention of joining the sex industry which is economic is never fully addressed.

Their concerns and difficulties then are addressed by the sex work activists who may or may not be a part of the trade but share similar ideologies and understandings. From quotations given by Nicole such as, *"For my research that I did for my undergrad, I talked to workers with very diverse backgrounds and the things that they all said were (laughs) same. The backgrounds they came from and the reasons they got into sex work were vastly different. Their experiences and lives and viewpoints were vastly different, but they all said that they wanted exactly the same things"* prove time and again that although their experiences, their understandings, their journeys or their style of activism might differ from each other but in the context of real people voicing out the actual problems of the trade, all the third wave sex work activists seem to be united (Vijaykumar, Panchanadeswaran & Chacko 2019; Pai, Seshu & Murthy, 2018).

### **Violence:**

The third most prominent feature of both sex work and sex work activism is the ever-lasting presence of visible violence and discrimination that is inflicted upon them in a variety of methods. Although the aspect of both physical and mental violence is recorded by especially the sex workers turned activists, the facet of mental violence and trauma leading to sometimes depression and anxiety issues is not actively ventured in the proposed study as it was prominent in only one of the cases and did not have enough evidence to justify the prospect. Thus, for the proposed research work, the prospect of only visible physical violence is put under scrutiny for critical analysis and retrospection.

With comments offered by Ava that includes, *"We sank everything we had in it cause we thought we would make the money back but shortly after that we started being harassed by the police and threatened by the police, lying to us, we knew they were lying, uh telling us things like "You can't have all these security cameras. The fire department is gonna come and chop your doors off" and no they are not you know. "I am going to report you to the revenue". And a lot of tried physical intimidation you know and uhm then finally the neighbours were vandalising our space, squirting things into our key hole so if we want to go in we have to carry tools to get all that stuff out you know just vandalising where we work and just harassment and intimidation. Then the police got our landlord through third party laws to evict us which uhm we got thrown out of our space and we lost basically everything."* and *"using men's bathroom in America I have had a gun put to my head and I have had my face spat. Most of us are beaten to death on set on fire or dragged behind the vehicle or burned alive or shot if we are lucky. I guess the system is designed to kill us"* makes the violence and discrimination that is associated with the proposed identity even more real.

In addition, comments reported by Nicole, *"I have already been disowned by my family from a very long time. I was raped by a roommate"* Sophie *"two girls last June were arrested and sentenced to 9 months in prison solely for working together even though there was no clients and no money present but the only crime they committed was working together and they got sentenced to 9 months in prison even though one was pregnant like one was 23 and one was 25. The only crime they committed as work together for safety"* and Kate, a vocal sex work activist from Dublin, *"After putting a saw through my shin or removing a finger uhm and uhm having to go home cause I have no medical insurance and clean up that dirty finger and sew my finger tip back on, you know or reattach my own scalp after having a 214 by 2 by 4 hovering over my head you know so it's a constant broken bones"* supplements the grave situation faced periodically by the individuals involved in the industry and other related businesses.

Moreover, through comments reported by many of the other respondents including Bella, that includes, *"in Dublin for example where the Lewis works were ongoing and the traditional red light district was under threat. So sex workers had to move from Benburb street, the usual red light areas in the north of the city, they had to move up towards Arbour hills. And by doing that they faced the wrath of residents in those areas who were saying "No. you can't be around here." Bringing this kind of anti-social behaviour into the areas. And they were often abused and threatened and there were some anecdotal evidence of violent attacks and those sort of thing."* and one by Lucy which states that, *"One of the pernicious aspect of sex work is that people say, "Oh it's terrible terrible terrible that you do sex work" and shake the finger. Oh by the way, "You used to be a sex worker, you are fired". You are not gonna be allowed to teach children. You are not gonna allowed to be a lawyer. You can't be a police officer. Why don't you get a real job but also you are not allowed to get any real jobs for whatever reasons"* paints a genuine picture of the intensity of prejudice and discriminatory stigmatisation that the activists are fighting against.

The harsh reality of a 'developed' and 'liberal' society like Ireland or England, is made crystal from the above statements. Whether, it is a sex worker turned activist, a community led sex worker activist or an academic activist, all had witnessed some form of physical violence or other during their lifetime. The intensity or the type of violence might differ, but the strong presence of systematic and periodic violent confrontations could never be negated. The violence inflicted then could be divided into two categories which is visible and invisible. Where visible violence would include instances like putting a gun on the hand, spitted, raped, vandalism, disownment, dragged, burned, arrested, dragged behind a vehicle and others; invisible violence could be witnessed along the lines of intimidation and harassment using 'legal power', refusal of proper and equal medical assistance for both physical and mental harm; societal approved reformatory measures, denial of equal opportunity of jobs and others. These structural stigmatisations and discriminations, leading to violence and physical confrontation is present because of traditionalist stereotypes associated with the profession.

The perception of sex work to be exploitative and degenerative to humankind that was propagated widely in the 1850s, by the first wave of feminists is seen to be still very dominant in the contemporary times (Barry, 1995; Plummer, 1995), especially from the wide prominence of abolitionist perspective in Ireland that is adopted by most of the people in power. Various tweets like, *'Let's see your wife bending over for every Tom, Dick & Prick who walks into a brothel and then come back and talk to us about how prostitution is just "sex work"<sup>11</sup>*'; *'No matter how many times I see it, it still sickens me to watch women promote prostitution as viable for \*other\* women, yet erupt with indignation when asked if it'd be suitable for themselves. You weren't owed an apology Laurel, and it's you who owes an apology to all women<sup>12</sup>*'; and *'The National Women's Council of Ireland congratulates the election win of a politician whose party advocates for the full decriminalisation of Irish pimps. Apparently @bridsmithTD will be "an important voice for women & equality" in our new government. Is this some sort of joke?<sup>13</sup>*' from one of the most prominent abolitionist campaigners of Ireland, Rachel Moran portrays how the first wave feminist discourse around sex work have been able to modernise itself to survive in the contemporary times.

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<sup>11</sup> October 13, 2019. @ Rachel Moran. Twitter.

<sup>12</sup> February 05, 2019. @Rachel Moran. Twitter.

<sup>13</sup> February 09, 2019. @Rachel Moran. Twitter.

Although, the pro-sex work campaign was brought forward by the professionalization argument of the second wave feminists (Beegan, 2017), it was not able to replace the prior dominance of victimhood campaign due to the primary reason of judicial interventions still holding strong grounds for any form of justification behind any success (Pai, Seshu & Murthy, 2018). This is leading to a growing gap between academia and raw activism which was then eventually fulfilled by the third wave personalised version of feminism (Plummer, 1995; Gillis and Munford 2004; Aune and Holyoak 2017; Downing, 2011; Cox 2014, 18).

This sometimes also results in creation of a new identity/ self to reject euphemistic terminology and repudiate societal conceptions of deviancy (Anspack, 1979; Goffman, 1963) primarily through the application of the digital platform (Sultana, 2015; Jenness, 1993). The power behind the legal jurisdictions and the impact that it still has on how a sex worker activist portrays itself while skilfully managing the diverse stigmatisations is something that will be ventured more aggressively in the next section. But the one thing that could be learned from this section is the significance and influence of one's economic position in a hierarchised society proves to be one of the most crucial impediments towards the decisions taken by the sex workers and the sex work activists of Dublin and London (Marx, 1867; McMurthy, 1973).

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **I am a Bitch! I am a Boss!**

In the wake of digitalized globalization there is a constant global health crisis and labour issues, environmental concerns, impending poverty leading to hunger, unemployment, and deaths. In all this necessary chaos the issue of morality and power dynamics involved around sex work activism seems to obtain a back seat in the global priority checklist. With the proposed work, I have portrayed why such social issue requires equal attention and care. Through the personal stories collected from the respective respondents, this essay first introspects the reasons and the causes behind the choice undertaken to be a sex worker or a prostitution campaigner. It then navigates its conceptualization to the various struggles and violent discriminations that the affected must face in their daily lives and the novice means and strategies employed to manage and handle associated stigma.

From the various data collected from my respondents, there was a clear finding of the sex workers or the prostitution campaigners being financially broken before coming into prostitution. It is however, not to be negated that illegal and forced trafficking along with routinised violence in the hands of the pimps and the other brothel owners is one of the significant characteristics in prostitution. Patriarchy is seen to reach its climax when the female body turns into a commodity and a symbol of patriarchal dominance. But the concerned study was more concerned about the factors involved in making such a decision which was very strongly found to be lack of finances and adequate opportunities. Many often used it as a kind of an escape route from their daily boring or very violent lives. The primary cause being the advertisements around sex work which is popularized very attractively and anyone who is willing can earn a lot of money in a very short amount of time. So, the predominant notion on which the entire Nordic model is based on is seen to have proven false in this case as the respondents claim to be financially and often emotionally struggling before entering the sex trade. It is true that there were broken further while being an active participant in the trade due to routine stigmatizations, violence, and prejudiced discriminations. Their brokenness and subjugation, however, are not a result of the choice of profession but due to the socio-cultural and political definitions associated with the trade and the people involved in it. Activism then becomes a pre-requisite necessity for survival and equal respect for those who are actively

involved in the trade. Whereas for others like the academic activists or other independent individuals or community members who might fight for either side of the cause, do it for the sake of willingness, interest, morality, compassion, zeal for change and upliftment for the community.

The essential revelation here is that the sex worker or the sex work activists that comes into prostitution are often financially struggling and so the only viable approach out for them in which they can earn some quick and easy money in their own time is to become a sex worker. As, this is one of the factors that is often overlooked by the propagators of the abolitionist perspective running the administration, their reformation and rehabilitation approach of the 'victims' often fall short of their objective. Most of the 'rescued individuals' go back into prostitution as they are not presented with viable alternatives. Moreover, the practise of infantilization that is associated with the 'victims' is seen to devalue the independent choices taken by the concerned individual. Hence, the Nordic model that is seen to be quite prominent in the whole of Europe including Ireland and England is not able to 'solve the problem' with their legal approaches and their propogandist ideology.

While on the other hand the pro-professionalization of sex work approach that seeks for legal recognition of sex work and considers it as any other form of emotional investment has faced certain shortcomings in properly addressing the novice challenges. Although, quite empowering with their approach the strategies and methods in utilization is witnessed to be more elite and less representative of the real stories. Thus, the third wave approach towards conceptualizing the evolution of sex work campaigning is seen to be relevant here as it is able to bring into the limelight the real stories and struggles of the people without necessarily appointing a representative. This resulted due to the growing socio-political and cultural consciousness of the affected people through the knowledge gathered from the digital space. Due to the rise of a digitalized capitalism, the world wide web is considered as a more secular and diverse alternative to the traditional educational institutions which is often an active site of power politics. What we can see in this third wave of feminist discourse is real sex work activists, trying in their very own personalized and unique ways to adorn their femininity and fight against centuries old patriarchal norms. Often conducted using humour in performative acts and plays, the notion of propagating 'self-love' in its very own form is the most impactful by the contemporary campaigners. Due to its growing significance, the various available digital platforms are seen to be the most suitable option for the prostitution campaigners. Although most of the times it acts yet another social institution of moral policing but alternatively presents them with a space to dictate their own terms.

Unlike other prominent social institutions like the Church, the educational institutions, the judiciary or the administration, the internet is seen to be the last remaining space for strong and diverse voices like those of the sex work activists. They provide a space for those that prefer to adorn their diversity of experiences but still feel confident enough to claim global solidarity in knowledge, life course, understanding, ideology, stigmatizing prejudice, and violence. The 'wave paradigm' that was to be critically analysed and adopted in the context of contemporary prostitution campaigners of Dublin and London, seems to be quite apt as a clear evolution of feminist ideals and strategies could be witnessed. In contrast to the previous two generations that believes in a complete revolution to bring forward their definition of justice, the third wave sex work campaigners have presented with an alternative style of voicing out their concerns. Much like the campaigning styles adopted by the LGBTQIA movement, the third wave sex worker activists are also adopting a rainbow and glitter approach towards challenging the prevailing dominant norms and stigmatisations around the sex work industry and its associated people. Although it might seem that the pride that is



associated with owning the stigma and prejudice of being a sex work activist is something to be modern and contemporary. But if explained in terms of the wave paradigm of feminist evolution, it could be argued that the third wave sex work feminist discourse is a culmination and an impending consequence of its previous two generations.

The issue of safety and systematized patriarchy is what both the previous generations of sex work feminist discourse has been rallying on through either their abolitionist perspective or their decriminalization of sex work perspective. The third wave prostitution campaigners are too rallying along the exact same factors. The only difference being unlike its previous two generations of banking on the legal jurisdiction for validity of their claims, the contemporary prostitution campaigners are more comfortable in using the online space as it is far more real and representative than the other surrogates who might have become more elitist with their armchair arguments. It is also considered to be safer than rallying on the streets and in person due to the various possibility of administered violence that could be inflicted on them. This style of campaigning is thus, claimed to be more peaceful and impactful than its previous two generations.

Furthermore, defensive manoeuvres like such along with other characteristics that are learned through the trade, allows them to 'manage' stigma instead of claiming for a direct and macro uprooting of structured patriarchy in the society. This new form of self/identity is then able to systematically formulate a new kind of gendered knowledge around sex work and sex work activism that can propose an alternative which is not necessarily too stark in comparison to its predecessors. It seen to be an amalgamation of the dominant discourse around the sex work industry and recommend a pathway that might be unique in its approaches but is a revamping of the older ideologies. As it is more representative without any middle wo/man, the true stories of real individuals get an opportunity to formulate a unique kind of alternative knowledge. It challenges the dominant discourse in a way that need not be totally revolutionary. The style of campaigning involved is seen to be more along the lines of managing and manipulating systematic and structured prejudices of the society instead of going forward with a more drastic uprooting of the prevailing social system. The tactics thus, employed by the third wave campaigners could be better and more effective due to one of their central belief of true change being possible only by being inside the system, not outside.

The contribution and understanding of the academic activists are very crucial here as, without their support, the process of knowledge generation could never be intervened and appropriately altered. As stated in the findings chapter, the academic activists act as an entry point or a reference point for many sex workers in the field who desire to change ideologies of the people in power. Although, there is still a divide between the academic activists supporting abolitionist perspective versus the ones supporting professionalisation of sex work; they nonetheless act as one of the major routes towards the process of knowledge production. Hence, with the coming in of the new paradigm shifts in sex work conceptualisations, the contemporary academic activists need to be more flexible and shrewder in aligning with the third wave sex work discourse in politically charged platforms and institutions. It would assist the third wave campaigners present their real problems directly to the people in power and in the language that they are familiar with.

The primary objective of the sex workers and the sex work activists of both Ireland and England is to address the old and static duality of conceptualising sex work with a more glamorous middle range alternative. By strengthening the feminine pizzazz associated with the trade, they want to address the long-rooted patriarchy behind all the stigmatising prejudices and discriminatory violence associated with the sex industry. The tool or strategy

in utilisation is seen to be creative defensive manoeuvres like managing stigma often through humour which is cemented on the concept of revolutionary changes being utopian in the contemporary capitalist market structure. So, to address the real problems of the society, real and practical solutions are sought by the third wave campaigners. The strategies and methods of planning and execution might differ from one another but, due to the unity of thought and similarity in experiences, a form of global solidarity of sex work activism and understanding could be claimed.

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