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SANTA BARBARA

Flirting with Sexual Economies: A Study on The Latina Body in Popular Culture and Online Sex Work Industries

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Aracely Garcia-Gonzalez

Committee in charge

Professor Chela Sandoval, Chair

Professor Micaela Diaz Sanchez

Professor Mireille Miller-Young

Professor Eddy Alvarez, Jr.

June 2023

The dissertation of Aracely Garcia Gonzalez is approved.

_____
Eddy Francisco Alvarez, Jr.

_____
Micaela Díaz-Sanchez

_____
Mireille Miller-Young

_____
Chela Sandoval, Chair

May 2023

Flirting with Sexual Economies: A Study on The Latina Body in Popular Culture and Online Sex Work Industries

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by

Aracely Garcia-Gonzalez

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is rooted in a political alignment with sex workers' struggles. Sex worker activists are at the forefront of conversations pertaining to justice and often occupy multiple categories of marginalization. It feels necessary to begin these acknowledgments by addressing them to sex workers around the globe who are actively erased from feminist discourses and punished for existing. A central objective of this project is to specifically name the political contributions that sex workers continuously make toward justice. This work would not exist without the active political organizing of sex workers. To all the sex workers I've met, both knowingly and unknowingly, I love you. You are so special, and your unique understanding of power is groundbreaking. I promise to continue advocating alongside you and redistributing resources amongst our communities. What an honor to be part of this community. I want to give a special shoutout to the Sex Worker Giving Circle, an organization that advocates for funding sex worker-led projects and social justice initiatives. Working with you all and being connected with sex workers and extended networks has been such a delightful experience. Thank you, Pati Morales, for including me in the fellow selection process. The people I met throughout the process reminded me that I am not alone as a worker.

Prior to beginning a Ph.D. program in Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I read theorists like Gloria Anzaldúa and other contributors to *This Bridge Called My Back*. Their bravery and curiosity sparked my passion for learning and theorizing about the body. As a first-year student, I had the opportunity to take a course with Chela Sandoval titled "Decolonizing Feminisms," and it shaped the trajectory of my academic career. It has been the greatest gift to be taught by such a profound thinker like che and a privilege to continue to think alongside her. You changed the way that my brain works. My dissertation would

not have the adventurous, flirtatious, and whore-like "I don't give a fuck" U.S. Third-World Feminist attitude without the academic freedom that you facilitated for me. You allowed me to be a theorist within the neoliberal university system that prioritizes marketability over intellectual curiosity; I cannot thank you enough.

As an undergraduate student, I took a course titled "Feminist Methodologies," As part of my grade, I had to participate in a group presentation on porn. While preparing for my group presentation, I researched scholarship on pornography and came across Mireille Miller-Young's work on Black women in pornography. I immediately knew I wanted to work with her, and she is why I researched programs at UCSB. Mireille has always treated my research interests with great respect and interest. And without her scholarship, I would not have been able to recognize the validity and importance of this research within the university setting. Thank you, Mireille, for taking me in as your student and recognizing my potential even before I could. To the rest of my committee, Micaela Díaz-Sánchez and Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr., your support has been a blessing. Micaela, I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to be your student and to engage with performance studies. You bring such a crucial perspective to this department, and I have been continuously inspired by how you approach scholarship. I vividly remember when you gave a guest lecture in a graduate seminar taught by a senior faculty member attacking you and performance studies as a field. You responded, saying, "What is happening right now is a performance." I immediately understood performance theory and reading power in a new light. And it has stuck with me ever since. Your everyday gestures of resistance are such an inspiration to witness and read. Thank you. Eddy, you have revolutionized how I understand feminist mentorship and community. Not only is your work constantly teaching me new ways of understanding the world, but you also walk that talk. I remember the first time we spent time

together at NWSA in Atlanta in 2018; we shared a hotel room, and one night, as we were getting ready for dinner, we had a dance party in the hotel room, and you were dancing and shaking your ass. To see your joy and freedom come through so strongly made me feel secure in being my most authentic self. Thank you. To staff members, Shariq, Mayra, Roy, and Fallon, thank you for having the patience to figure out pressing questions, even with the impossible expectations from the university. Joann, you have been such a guiding star. I always felt rejuvenated and at home talking about astrology in your office. Your service to this department has been so instrumental in how it has grown over the years. Thank you for all your expertise and kindness.

My project has been guided by incredible thinkers who are graduate students, undergraduate students, and faculty members. My graduate school colleagues have pushed my thinking and inspired my intellectual trajectory. To my cohort, Paulina Ramirez-Niembro, Alejandro Ollin Prado, Mariano Nava, and honorary Amaru Tejeda: your friendship kept me grounded in some of the most challenging years of my life. I will always cherish our years together, weekly dinners, and sci-fi nights. It is an honor to know you all and call you my friends. To my colleagues across campus, your work inspires me to be a better person. Seb Ferrada, in my first few years of grad school, I was fortunate to spend time and watch you finish at UCSB. Our neighborly hangouts were such a treat to indulge in. Thank you for being such a light. Erick John Rodriguez, our conversations make my brain tingle. Your brilliance is awe-inspiring, and I thank you so much for keeping my desire to think alive. Pati Morales, you are such a gift to this world, and I am so grateful that our paths crossed. Your contributions to sex worker advocacy and questions of the organization of labor in the academy are so powerful. Jazmine Exford, our nights dancing together got me through this program and you always made Santa Barbara bearable.

To faculty across campus, in Sociology, Feminist Studies, Chicana and Chicano Studies, and Black Studies: thank you for providing such a high level of education. Your courses and overall engagement with my research questions pushed me to be a sharp thinker. I wouldn't trade this education for the world. I also want to acknowledge the brilliance of undergraduate students at UC Santa Barbara who have guided my thinking and pushed me to be a better scholar and teacher. Thank you for your engagement with my thinking and for your never-ending contributions to the production of knowledge.

Lastly, to my friends and family in the Central Valley of California. Gabby, Chava, Ana, Rosa, my mom and my dad, Neirit, Juan, Bianca, Joel. Thank you for celebrating every milestone with me, no matter how small. Thank you for feeding me and for loving me, for reminding me of the incredible world outside of the university. I wouldn't have finished without you. To my fur babies, Boov, X, and my adopted honorary child Anubis: coming home to you is my favorite rejuvenating activity. You all continuously keep me grounded through the chaos of academia. I love you. And to the Central Valley of California: I see your value even when the world convinces me to abandon you. I love you and I'll be home soon.

Aracely Garcia-Gonzalez, Ph.D.

Effron Center for the Study of America|
Princeton University | e: aracely@ucsb.edu

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey

2023 Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Effron Center for the Study of America

EDUCATION

University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA

2023 **Ph.D., Chicana and Chicano Studies**
Dissertation: Flirting with Sexual Economies: An Ethnographic Study of Latinas in Digital Sex Work
Committee: Chela Sandoval (chair), Micaela Díaz-Sánchez, Mireille Miller-Young (Feminist Studies), Eddy Alvarez Jr. (Chicanx Studies, CSU Fullerton)

2017 **M.A., Chicana and Chicano Studies**
Dossier Papers: "Relational Sexuality: Living the Politics of the Woman/Female Dichotomy" and "Dismantling Power; Consummating Manhood: Masculinity, Male Emotional Vulnerability and the Female Body"

California State University, Monterey Bay, Monterey, CA

2015 **B.A., Humanities, and Communications, Chicana/o Studies**
Minor: Spanish Languages and Culture
Study abroad: CSU International Program, Florence, Italy 2012-2013
Thesis: "Theorizing Sexuality: Living the Virgin-Whore Continuum"

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

Chicana Feminisms, Decolonial Theory, Sex Work Studies, Gender, Racialized Aesthetics, Latina Sexualities, Political Economy, Labor Studies

PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

2023 Sandoval, Chela, Garcia-Gonzalez, Aracely, Niembro-Ramirez, Paulina "Teaching Decolonizing Feminisms and Witnessing as Method"

2023 Garcia-Gonzalez, Aracely "Doing Racialized Gender: Performing The Latina Body in Online Sex Work" *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Gender*. Edward Elgar Publishing. Invited. (Expected in 2023)

2021 Garcia-Gonzalez, Aracely "Understanding the Relevance of Sex Work for Latina Sexualities Studies" *Chicano Studies Institute* e-Research Report (accepted)

2021 Café con Chisme, "Support Sex Workers featuring Aracely Garcia Gonzalez." Season 5, Episode 3. https://open.spotify.com/episode/0kQG2xW2xgt8DbnjNLWJms

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Forthcoming *Spicy Mami, Hot Tamale:* Embodying Afro-Latinidad Through Cardi B—Flirting with, Fucking, and Taunting Respectability

Forthcoming Negotiating Economies of Desire: Anti-Blackness in Creating "The Latina Body"

Forthcoming *Your Post Goes Against Community Guidelines*: Monetizing Sex Worker Discourse While Purging the Internet of Whores

INVITED LECTURES

2021 "Negotiating Economies of Desire in Digital Sex Work" Emerson College, Boston, MA, Zoom.

HONORS AND AWARDS

RESEARCH GRANTS

2022 ARPA Grant UCSB Graduate Division—$14,000. One-quarter dissertation support.
2022 UCSB Graduate Division Dissertation Write-In Grant Recipient
2022 HEERF Grant UCSB Graduate Division—$14,000. One-quarter dissertation support.
2022 Honorable Mention, Dissertation Fellowship Program, Ford Foundation
2021 CARES Act MSI Summer Grant Committee (UCSB)
2021 *UCSB Dean's Office,* COVID19 Relief Grant. $14,000. Awarded a one-quarter relief grant in recognition of extraordinary COVID19 challenges to research.
2019-2021 *McCune Foundation* Grassroots Organization Grant. Awarded for parent outreach programs in the Santa Ynez Valley to mobilize parents, students, and community members to demand K-12 admin implement an anti-racist curriculum—$40,000
2019-2021 *The Fund for Santa Barbara*, Social Justice Grant. Granted for research on anti-racist curriculum to be implemented in the Santa Ynez Valle K-12 school system—$32,000
2020 UCSB Department of Chicana/o Studies, Merit Block Grant. Awarded for dissertation research, collecting qualitative interview data from Onlyfans.com content creators.
2018-2019 UCSB Department of Chicana/o Studies Merit Block Grant—awarded for dissertation research in Summer 2018 and Spring 2019

2015-2017 UCSB Chicana/o Studies Institute Graduate Student Fellowship—$600

SUMMER TRAINING

2021 *UC President's Pre-Professoriate Fellowship Program* (UCSB) Exploring and Preparing for the Professoriate Summer Institute

2021 *Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* (UCSB) Education and Outreach Summer Internship

TEACHING AWARDS

2020-2021 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award recipient
Academic Senate, University of California, Santa Barbara

2019-2020 Outstanding Mentorship Award nominee
Academic Senate, University of California, Santa Barbara

2019-2020 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award nominee
Academic Senate, University of California, Santa Barbara

2018-2019 Excellence in Teaching Award nominee
Graduate Student Association, University of California, Santa Barbara

2017-2018 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award nominee
Academic Senate, University of California, Santa Barbara

CONFERENCE PAPERS

2021 "Latinas For Sale: Advertising Latinidad & Latina Sexualities on Chatturbate.com" Workshop on Webcam Sex Platforms. University of Amsterdam, June 17 (Zoom)

2019 "Hoe Shit: Eroticism, Deviance, and Black Ho/Litical Futures." To Freedom!: Black Feminist Futures Colloquium. University of California, Santa Barbara, April 4th

2019 "Revisiting K-12 Curriculum in Chicana and Chicano Studies". 50th Anniversary of El Plan: Where are We Now? University of California, Santa Barbara. February 22

2018 "Hyperfemme as Currency: Femininity in the Context of Global Capitalism." National Women Studies Association (NWSA) Atlanta, GA, November 5-8

2018 "Locating Illicit Eroticism: Cardi B and the Hoodrat Aesthetic." Latino Studies Association (LSA). Washington, DC. July 11th-15th

2018 "Latina Sexualities on the Covers of Sports Illustrated." National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS). Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 5th-7th

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant

Spring 2017 School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society (SKILLS)
University of California, Santa Barbara
- Adapted existing high school curriculum into the 5th-grade curriculum and facilitated curriculum for new SKILLS program in grade school

Winter 2017 Supervisor Aída Hurtado, Professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies
University of California, Santa Barbara
- Collected data for content analysis and coded dataset

Fall 2016 Supervisor Aída Hurtado, Professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies
University of California, Santa Barbara
- Drafted literature review on the history of women of Color on the cover of *Sports Illustrated: Swimsuit Edition*

Winter 2016 Supervisor Aída Hurtado, Professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies
University of California, Santa Barbara
- Researched and compiled academic articles, popular journalism, and media examples for a research project on Latina sexualities

Research Supervision

Fall 2018 Undergraduate Research Assistant Supervisor
Collaborative study: University of California, Santa Barbara, and University of California, Santa Cruz
- Supervised 12 undergraduate research assistants who recruited research participants, managed scheduling of participants, and administered surveys. Taught them how to design a survey and organize survey data

Spring 2018 Research Project Supervisor
School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society (SKILLS)
University of California, Santa Barbara
- Collaborated with co-instructor and undergraduate classroom mentors to supervise the creation of original linguistic research for their final project and presentation at UCSB SKILLS Day

Winter 2018 Undergraduate Research Assistant Supervisor
University of California, Santa Barbara
- Supervised eight undergraduate research assistants' content analysis of covers of *Sports Illustrated: Swimsuit Edition*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD—University of California, Santa Barbara

Sum. 2022 CHST 149: Body, Culture, Power (35 Students)
Class designed with analysis of how the racialized body speaks back to power. Paying close attention to theories of embodiments, queer of color theory, Latina sexualities studies and sex work studies

Sum. 2020 CHST 138: Barrio Popular Culture (30 students; Zoom, *COVID-19*)
Class designed with analysis centering Power and Political economy in relation to cultural production and self-fashioning as politically subversive
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies

Sum. 2018 CHST 1B: Introduction to Chicana/o Studies—Gender (30 students)
Class designed with analysis centering on gender as a colonial introduction
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies

Teaching Assistant—University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2022 CHST 151: De-Colonizing Feminism (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Spring 2022 FEMST 150: Sex, Love, and Romance (60 Students)
Department of Feminist Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Winter 2022 CHST 1A: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: History (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2021 CHST 1C: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: Culture (80 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Spring 2021 CHST 1B: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: Gender (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2020 CHST 1A: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: History (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Winter 2020 CHST 134: Chicana Writers (60 students)

Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2019 CHST 151: De-Colonizing Feminism (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Winter 2019 CHST 134: Chicana Writers (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Spring 2018 CHST 187: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: Gender (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2018 CHST 134: Chicana Writers (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Winter 2018 CHST 1B: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: History **Head Teaching Assistant** (160 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2017 CHST 1A: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: History (60 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Winter 2017 CHST 1B: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: Gender (40 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2016 CHST 1A: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: History (40 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Spring 2016 CHST 1C: Introduction to Chicana and Chicano Studies: Culture (40 students)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

MENTORSHIP & SERVICE TO THE PROFESSORIATE

Panel Service

2021 *Sex Work 101—Platica*
Hermanas Unidas in Collaboration with Red Umbrellas SB. Invited Speaker.

2021 *Talkin' Sex*
Géneros Marginados Unides por Justicia, Educación, y Revolución (M.U.J.E.R) de UCSB, Workshop Facilitator

2020 *Making Educational Networks That Open Roads (M.E.N.T.O.R) Presentation on Getting Your Degree*
Hermanas Unidas. Panelist for High School Students Visiting the University

2020 *Breaking Barriers: Mental Health for Fems & Friends*.
The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). Panelist

Mentorship Service

2022 Graduate Student Mentor, ONDAS Student Center
First-Generation Resource Center, University of California, Santa Barbara

2021 Latina Sexualities Research Collective, University of California, Santa Barbara
Formed a group of undergraduate researchers who meet monthly with interests in research areas in sexualities to refine research projects, methods, and questions

2020-2021 McNair Scholars Application Bootcamp—Individual mentoring with students interested in pursuing research. Helped to develop robust application materials and research proposals for first-generation students

2019-2021 Theory Reading Group with Undergraduates—Individual sessions to help undergraduates learn the method of close reading

Committee Work

2022 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award Selection Committee Member
Academic Senate, University of California, Santa Barbara

2020 Excellence in Teaching Award Selection Committee Member
Graduate Student Association, University of California, Santa Barbara

2019 Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies Graduate Representative
Graduate Student Association, University of California, Santa Barbara

Workshop Facilitation

2019 *Latina Friendships*
Géneros Marginados Unides por Justicia, Educación, y Revolución (M.U.J.E.R) de UCSB, Workshop Facilitator

2019 *Combatting Machismo*

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). Presenter and Workshop Facilitator

2018 *The Racialized Body*
Géneros Marginados Unides por Justicia, Educación, y Revolución (M.U.J.E.R) de UCSB. Workshop Facilitator

POLICY ADVOCACY

2023-Present *Sex Worker Giving Circle—Third Wave Fund*
Grant selection advisor. Aid in the national search for sex worker grant-making cohort. The organization connects current and former sex workers with various training opportunities to gain experience in grant-making and community-building workshops.

2021-2022 *Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability*, Central Valley, California
Research and community engagement around environmental racism caused by agricultural pollutants on disadvantaged, unincorporated communities in rural California to push for sound policy change on the State level

2019-2021 *INCLUSION SYV*, Santa Ynez Valley, California
K-12 Anti-racism curriculum research and implementation strategies
Duties include grant writing, community programming, mobilizing direct actions, and direct partnerships with school boards and school administrators to push for sound policy in local schools that addresses inequity in K-12

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS
National Women Studies Association, National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, Latina/o Studies Association, Chicana/Latina Studies Association

ABSTRACT

Flirting with Sexual Economies: A Study on The Latina Body in Popular Culture and Online Sex Work Industries

by

Aracely Garcia Gonzalez

Interactive, online sex work is a relatively new and undertheorized industry in the sex trade. Research in sex work has uncovered rich and complicated histories of Black sexualities and their connections to global capitalism and imperialist projects. However, understanding Latinas and Latinidad in the context of sexual labor and global economies has not been adequately captured. Research on online sex work has begun to scratch the service of our understanding of how racialized sexualities transcend borders through virtual space to meet the high demand for "exotic" sexualities. In this interdisciplinary study, I examine the intentional creation of "The Latina Body" in the translational context to understand how trade agreements and public policy help shape a desire for The Latina Body. I use sex work studies as an essential framework here because, like Black sexualities, Latina sexualities are entwined with legacies of imperialism and economical extraction and exploitation. My study adds to this conversation by theorizing The Latina Body as a strategically manufactured imaginary that erases Blackness and Indigeneity from the mythology of Latinidad to create a palatable *desire* from the United States into the Global South. These desires also create industries based on this logic, such as sexual economies like digital sex work. I am intervening primarily in decolonial theory, political economy, labor studies,

Chicanx studies, and sex work studies to create a sub-area that I call the political economy of Latina sexualities. Through this framework, I study The Latina Body in popular culture and online pornography to answer the following research questions: 1) How does U.S. foreign policy aid in creating The Latina Body? 2) How does The Latina Body become a consumable product born from colonialism and imperialist logic? 3) How are racialized online sexual economies created in countries like Colombia and the U.S.? 4) Why do Latina sex workers invoke or refuse narratives of racialized sexualities in their online sex work?

For the first chapter, I conducted a content analysis of U.S. trade policies with Latin American countries. These policies are accompanied by media campaigns that position Latina sexualities as metaphors for bountiful land. I also analyze media representations of Latina sexualities to understand the creation of The Latina Body in the public imaginary. The second chapter examines AfroLatina rap artist Cardi B and her social media presence as a former dancer in New York City. I conducted a discourse analysis of her video narratives on the social media platform, Instagram, to theorize her explicit sex worker discourse through her lived experience as a Black Latina. I note how she signals Black Latinidad and desires through her work to disrupt notions of respectable femininity and signal often-incomprehensible defiance of gendered labor. In the third chapter, I look at digital sex workers on the subscription-based website Onlyfans.com to analyze the surveillance mechanisms of online pornography. I interviewed both cis and trans-Latinas who sell content online to understand how they navigate their gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and national identities in their work. The fourth chapter turns to the adult webcam platform Chaturbate.com. I utilize online *Virtual Ethnography* to travel to Colombia, the world's second-largest producer of webcam models per capita. Colombia experiences economic instability due to U.S. trade policies. Meanwhile, the webcam industry illuminates a desire from U.S.

consumers to travel virtually to Colombia and consume The Latina Body. The webcam industry is a stabilizing industry. "The Latina Body" is the contradiction that allows global capitalism to continue to seem logical. Its creation has facilitated exploitative trade agreements and has contributed to exponential economic growth in the camming industry.

Drawing on decolonial theory, Latin American studies, theories of political economy, sociology, sex work studies, Chicana feminisms, and feminist studies, this study introduces new perspectives and areas of research for Latina sexualities and argues for the integration of sex work in our understandings of racialized sexualities. It is one of the few studies that approach Latina sexualities through the lens of sex work to better understand the global processes of capitalism and economic expansion. I posit that sex work as a labor category can teach us about how Latinas interface with global operations and how they learn to flirt with, to fuck, and to taunt the power dynamics they interface with. This study moves beyond the debate of sex work as either exploitative or empowering to advance our understanding of the legacies of colonialism and how these legacies influence our relationships with global markets.

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Introduction
Flirtation:
Latina Sex Worker Consciousness

Like women everywhere, we speak in code…
—Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

The goal here is to consolidate and extend what we might call manifestos for liberation in order to better identify and specify a mode of emancipation that is effective within the first world neocolonizing global conditions during the twenty-first century.
—Chela Sandoval

My body is not trustworthy.

In a dream world…

Caught between the unreal, the hyperreal, and the other.
Like a lucid dream…

I see a body, *my body*, as a mirror.

Only it doesn't mimic me.

Permanent body dysmorphia embedded in the edges of my hips.
Thighs too thick. *Too thick?*

I am a 9-year-old girl.
I don't trust this body.
I've *learned* not to trust this body.
Been conditioned to fear this body.
To hide this body.

I've never trusted this body.

The way history meticulously drips through the air—painting a story on
and marking this body.
The unspoken slipping through the half-smile of my lips.
Whispering between the rubbing of my thighs.
Hips too wide. Breasts too big.

I never trusted this body.

The way el señor en la carniceria called me his morenita; I smile for a second before I am reminded—every Saturday morning when my mama would teach me como ir al mandado.

I am an 11-year-old girl.
Walking through the McDonald's parking lot on the corner of Shaffer and Bellevue in Atwater.
In the middle of California's Central Valley 110-degree summer.
Two brown men. Late-twenties. Seeing the unrecognizable mirror in me.
"Damn, baby girl, can I get your number."
But I'm only thirteen.
Body dysmorphia.
As though I needed the reminder.

This body doesn't belong to me.

How can I make it belong to me?

Caught between imposition and self-identification.
Living in multiple worlds.

At once.

As a Chicana growing up in an immigrant home in the Central Valley of California, my body and sexuality were constantly scrutinized. My mother taught me to be beautiful and self-fashion in a way that commanded respect. In her view, that meant being clean, perfectly manicured, and eloquent. However, my inherited view of femininity seldom translated into so-called appropriate embodiment. I was in the sixth grade when a teacher's comment shifted my relationship with my body. Mrs. Schmidt pulled me aside to discuss the inappropriateness of my clothing, expressing genuine concern that I would become pregnant. At the time, I did not realize that she found my body inappropriate, not my clothing. Experiences such as these brought me to one of the primary theses of my research: when you are Latina, your body is braided with legacies of desire that are often imposed without your consent.

My undergraduate training introduced me to my not-yet formulated research questions. In my Chicana/o Studies courses, we discussed the North American Free Trade Agreement. I remember feeling frustrated by my inability to answer the question that burned in the back of

my throat: how could the U.S. continue to justify economic destabilization in countries in the Global South? I was already learning that my body indexed racialized, sexual meanings, but what if my lived experiences were somehow related to these global processes?

At the end of Fall 2018, I sat in my critical cultural theory graduate seminar final session taught by Chela Sandoval with my dear friend Paulina Niembro-Ramirez and other graduate students. Our final required that we read our papers aloud to the group. This was the first time I pieced together, in written form, the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation. As I wrote my final paper, the words came out like poetry. Before coming to graduate school, I had enjoyed lively and creative writing. I spent my adolescent years writing in journals, making sense of my feelings and the world around me without caring for rules about writing.

When I arrived as an undergraduate student at California State University, Monterey Bay, I was introduced to embodied ways of knowing, feeling, and thinking. I was enlivened by writers like Gloria Anzaldúa, who wrote with such imagination. She wrote from the core of her being and taught me much about being a philosopher and a theorist. Arriving at UCSB, I soon found that that type of writing would be violently beaten out of me by academics who didn't seem to understand me. Still, as I read the final aloud in 2018, I recognized that voice of mine that I had missed so dearly. Tears escaped me, unwillingly, like a broken dam. I might have felt embarrassed if I had not felt a surging sense of relief. When I finished reading, Chela turned to me and said, "This is my favorite type of writing. This is a femme manifesto." I begin this dissertation with this poem from 2018 because it encapsulates the motivating factors of this work. Truthfully, I have asked the questions in this dissertation my entire life without the proper language to understand what I wanted to know. I came to the University of California, Santa Barbara, to work with scholars like Mireille Miller-Young, whose work exemplifies the

intricate relationships between sex and race. It is this genealogy of scholarship that has made me feel at home. Reading Mireille's work was the beginning of a new language.

My body has always communicated excess. My self-adornment has always made people uncomfortable. Like they were seeing something in me that I couldn't see. Until I realized that I had been conditioned to erase those parts of me, to be blinded by them and afraid to truly see. But when I recognized that and the power that that consciousness held, I think that's when my liberation happened. This dissertation names a particular skill that racialized, sexualized subjects possess. The seers who, through their consciousness, question labor and the structural foundation of capitalism as a racial and gender project. This dissertation is an apology to my body in more ways than one. A love letter to my body. It is a witnessing of the immense knowledge that sexualized people hold. I am grateful to this body; for the knowledge it has granted me access to.

This dissertation locates racialized sexuality (sexuality defined under a racial hierarchy introduced through colonization, conquest, and enslavement) as a critical point of investigation. It centralizes racialized sexuality and sexual labor as strategic flirting, fucking, and taunting of the social order. "Flirting with Sexual Economies" argues that feminized labor should not be decoupled from sex work and sexuality studies. This dissertation argues that for Latina women, like black women and other women of color, labor and sexuality are inherently integrated. This project explores women's labor and its role within a capitalist system. "Flirting with Sexual Economies investigates the relationship between labor, sexuality, and femininity. I claim that there is a conscious and unconscious flirtation between Latinas and how they navigate the world. I am introducing *flirtation* as a theoretical category like Esteban Muñoz's disidentification (Muñoz, 1990) and Mireille Miller-Young's Illicit Eroticism (Miller-Young,

2014), which describes the use of racialized sexuality to manipulate gendered and racialized oppression. And this flirtation is comprised of differential politics (Sandoval, 2006). I document racialized hypersexuality, a term I use to describe an ideology that locates women of color as uncontrollably sexual, fertile, and dangerous to white femininity. Not all Latinas and women of color are identifiable as hypersexual. However, I argue that all women of color can, even without consent, move into this hypersexual category at any moment.

The first chapter contextualizes the historical legacies of colonization, conquest, and exploitation of sexuality with a detailed history of women's labor. The second chapter analyzes the cultural work of Cardi B— who flirts with, fucks, and taunts US global markets as she embodies a racialized hypersexualized subjectivity. She manipulates and negotiates her identities within the entertainment industry. The third chapter relies on qualitative interviews with OnlyFans content creators. The fourth chapter relies on a virtual ethnography of a webcam studio based in Colombia.

Note on Feminist Methodologies

Throughout this dissertation, I approach my research process with immense self-reflection. Feminist methodologies emphasize ethics that analyze the power dynamics between researcher and subject, naming unequal power dynamics and actively working to address power inequalities as best as possible. Therefore, when I began this research project, I was hyperaware of my own position as a researcher. I was also critical of how I positioned the population of sex workers that I interviewed and interacted with. For example, sex workers who primarily work online have a different set of

Chicana and Chicano Studies focus on avoiding extractive relationships between the university and the communities it engages with.

Historical Overview

Coloniality helps me understand gender as a social construction that historically aided in the colonization of the Americas. While racial capitalism is a formative study area for this dissertation, I employ Coloniality as a theoretical framework that outlines how race, gender, and sexuality matrix and organizes how capital moves. I illuminate how capitalism has historically exploited Latinx labor, particularly Latina sexual labor. This project theorizes and situates Latina labor as flirting and fucking *back.* Latinas seldom have the authority to own their sexual pleasure and embodiment. Part of the scope of this work is understanding why Latinas are positioned as sexually irresponsible while simultaneously being commodified and consumed as desirable products that help expand the U.S. empire. This project contextualizes sexuality and its cooptation by power structures, most notably and relevant to my project, capitalism, to further our understanding of how Latinas navigate imposed narratives about their bodies.

Decolonial theory is essential to my analysis because it historicizes gendered bodies of color as "other." This theoretical framework illustrates how colonization and enslavement introduced a hierarchy of exploitation utilized to organize labor, land, and the accumulation of wealth (Perez, 1996; Enloe, 1989; Federici, 2004; Lugones, 2007). This dissertation outlines the theoretical frameworks that expose the history of heteronormativity and other ideologies affecting people of color, specifically Latinas. "Flirting with Sexual Economies" bridges Chicana feminisms, third-world feminisms, Feminist Studies, performance, Sex Work Studies, and Queer theory.

Political Significance

Imposed ideologies of hypersexuality create an inescapable reality for women of color. I trace the process of hypersexualization to the colonization of the Americas because hypersexualization was a crucial component of domination. Consequently, women of color navigate the legacies of the unspoken subtext of Coloniality, often written on their bodies without consent. "Flirting with Sexual Economies" documents how Latina subjects taunt and play with an imposed hypersexualized gaze, using the imposed violence as a survival tactic and as a mode of being critical of how labor is organized under late-stage capitalism.

This dissertation centers on Latinas who are not protected by respectability politics; who were either pushed out or uninterested in mainstream ideas of success. They have been viewed as less than others because of their excessiveness. Too wide. Too thick. Too loud. Too much. Too sexy for their own good. Their sexualities are conceptualized from the moment of conquest as being too dangerous to be wielded on their own terms. This is a manifesto dedicated to Latinas who have a sophisticated understanding of the bits of knowledge outside of respectability.

This dissertation follows an academic genealogy within Chicana and Chicano Studies, particularly that of Chicana lesbians who have been at the forefront of boundary-pushing questions of desire and sexuality. My research follows Chicana lesbian feminist academic lineages to push the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies to approach sex, desire, and the body with curiosity and joy. Often at the expense of being attacked and isolated within their own communities. Chicana lesbians have pushed the field to embrace new areas of study to address heteropatriarchy and refuse various forms of respectability. The spirit of refusal is present in these pages, and I cite a long fight between Chicana lesbian theorists and the very structures of the discipline. Chicana identity and politics have been fused with narratives of religion, the

family, and motherhood. Chicanas have been constructed as selfless, prioritizing the good of the community over their own pleasures and safety. Told that their ability to perform respectable womanhood is the only avenue toward being seen as fully human. Yet Chicana lesbian theory invokes delicious defiance.

When I came to this project, I had experienced, to put it kindly, pushback about my interests in Chicana, Latina sexuality. I was met with many hostile comments about my work and soon realized that I would only be supported if I analyzed Latina sexualities from the perspective of harm. For example, how harmful being hypersexualized is for Latina youth. These intense reactions, my lack of ability to secure funding, and my personal experiences navigating the university as a racialized and sexualized subject pushed the political significance of this project. They caused me to question why our frameworks within Latina sexualities studies center on sexuality as something done to us rather than something we actively, joyfully, playfully, and pleasurably participate in.

I hope this project can: bring awareness to the condition of imposed hypersexuality—what role it plays in the lives of Latinas and their everyday interactions. I hope that it expands a subfield within Latina sexualities studies to seriously consider the role of political economy in the construction of sexual desire. I also hope this work pushes the field to find immense importance in sex work studies. I do not want this work to pathologize sex work. Yet, I do believe that it is essential to contextualize the role of colonization and coloniality in the process of imposed hypersexuality, to acknowledge the work in sex work, and to always center structural inequality in discussions of labor, sexuality, and gender. I hope this work can help build programs surrounding sexuality to center relationships with the body in these communities. To create venues for discussions surrounding hypersexuality, where it came

from, how it happened, and how to embrace our bodies and unlearn the fear associated with our excess. Lastly, although some scholars in Chicana and Chicano studies have questioned the place of this work in this field, this project is a Chicana and Chicano Studies project because, at its root, it seeks to center the marginalized, the underrepresented, working-class Latinas who are critical of labor. It is a Chicana/o Studies project because it is personal and could never be anything other than political (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1990).

Research Questions

1. How has the U.S. economic system utilized sexuality to build capital and profit? How have Latinas been hypersexualized? What are the connections between sexual economies and economic expansion? How does U.S. foreign policy aid in creating The Latina Body and desire for Latinidad?
2. How does The Latina Body become a consumable product born from colonialism and imperialist logic?
3. How are racialized online sexual economies created in countries like Colombia and the U.S.?
4. Why do Latina sex workers invoke or refuse narratives of racialized sexualities in their online sex work?

Literature Review

A. Critical Theory, Decolonial Theory, Heterosexuality, and the Unspoken

Decolonial theory outlines a historical relationship between capitalism and exploitation stemming from colonization. Nelson Maldonado-Torres further contributes to Walter D. Mignolo's concept of "The Coloniality of Being." Maldonado-Torres emphasizes that coloniality differs from colonialism in that colonialism details a relationship between a nation's

power over another, while coloniality details a pattern of power resulting from colonialism. Coloniality is the unspoken residue left behind (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). I utilize the concept of Coloniality as a framework for analyzing women's labor and sexuality and understanding how histories of colonization directly influence how gender, sexuality, and labor are performed. Maria Lugones, an Argentinian-born feminist philosopher, introduced a theoretical model that describes coloniality in relation to gender and sexuality. In response to Quijano's understanding of coloniality, Lugones introduces a framework she identifies as "The Colonial Modern Gender System." Lugones understands "The Colonial Modern Gender System" as a colonial introduction to organize and divide labor. According to Lugones, this system utilizes gender/race subordination as a tool for capitalist expansion. Through her work, Lugones asks:

> Two crucial questions that we can ask about heterosexualism from within it are: How do we understand heterosexuality not merely as normative but as consistently perverse when violently exercised across the colonial modern gender system so as to construct a worldwide system of power? How do we come to understand the very meaning of heterosexualism as tied to a persistently violent domination that marks the flesh multiply by accessing the bodies of the unfree in differential patterns devised to constitute them as the tortured materiality of power? (Lugones, 187-188)

Her framework outlines how heterosexuality and race are used to impose an ideology that allows for the success of capitalism through the division of labor and the dehumanization of the colonized/dominated. In other words, heterosexuality is an equally important component of how economic systems function. When I refer to heterosexuality, I do not mean to solely refer to sexual and emotional partnerships. Instead, I refer to a power system. Heterosexualism is an organizing power structure that necessitates purity, sexual reproduction, and heterosexual

coupling to preserve capital. Lugones discusses how forms of violence are vehemently imposed on dominated people. This violence is crucial to imposing heterosexual ideology onto the dominated. Lugones succinctly weaves together a theoretical framework by detailing how gender, sexuality, and race connect and align to fit capitalist agendas. She emphasizes this process as being the root of modernity.

Similar to Lugones' understanding of heterosexuality as a colonial introduction, Adrienne Rich's notion of "Compulsory Heteronormativity" is essential to understanding the ways in which heteronormativity is strongly implemented into everyday forms of life. Her understanding of the compulsory gives voice to systemic forms of control and power. Through Beth Schneider's reading of Rich, I understand how heteronormativity is implemented and forced upon populations. She states,

> In suggesting that heterosexuality is a political institution (1980: 637), Rich precisely means to indicate that it is not natural, but in a sense, its opposite; that being compulsory means heterosexuality is constantly in need of support and reinforcement by social and political institutions, material conditions, and physical violence. (Schneider, 90)

Schneider's reading of Rich exposes what we know about heterosexuality: it must be implemented and protected through violence. This violence is crucial to the success of "Compulsory Heterosexuality" and, more specifically, to the control of women's sexuality. Adrienne Rich states:

> The New Right's messages to women have been, precisely, that we are the emotional and sexual property of men, and that the autonomy and equality of women threaten family, religion, and state. The institutions by which women have traditionally been controlled—patriarchal motherhood, economic exploitation, the nuclear family,

> compulsory heterosexuality—are being strengthened by legislation, religious fiat, media imagery, and efforts at censorship. (Rich, 228)

Rich's understanding of women's positionality speaks to the ways in which heterosexuality, and other forms of ideological dominance, work to advance specific political agendas. Rich is exposing the institutional forces allowing this dominance to occur. Putting her analysis of the compulsory in conversation with Lugones' "Colonial Modern Gender System" allows me to historically trace the compulsory, to understand how colonization and enslavement introduced and embedded racialized gendered dominance and what functions this dominance continues to serve. Heterosexualism is a critical form of power, albeit an insidious one. Heterosexualism is integrated into social relations in the ease of accessing social resources and comfort. Being married, whether in a heterosexual or queer relationship, offers social protection. However, to access those social protections, one must conform to heterosexualism. When an individual persists in existing outside the rules of heterosexualism by refusing marriage, selling sex, or engaging in non-monogamous relationships, they are often relegated to social death. When one does not play by the rules of heterosexualism, they are punished. Lugones articulates this profound critique of how heterosexuality organizes human relations beyond sexual and romantic relationships.

Alongside Lugones and Rich, Michel Foucault's framework on discourse is essential to understanding violence, where violence came from, and how violence is strategically utilized to implement and maintain heteronormativity and other ideologies. The discourse surrounding the body in relation to the State is perhaps the most useful aspect of his analysis regarding my project. Suppose we understand his analysis of the regulation of birthrates by the

State as violence against the body. In that case, the other analyses of the body in terms of capital(ism) become even more fruitful. Foucault states:

> Of course, it had long been asserted that a country had to be populated if it hoped to be rich and powerful; but this was the first time that a society had affirmed, in a constant way, that its future and its fortune were tied not only to the number and the uprightness of its citizens, to their marriage rules and family organization, but to the manner in which each individual made use of his sex. (Foucault 26)

Foucault's understanding of the use of birthrates speaks to the surveillance of heterosexual reproduction. As noted by Foucault, the reproduction process is especially crucial to a country's health and wealth, and resource accumulation. Sexuality, in the context of modern capitalism, should always be productive. Through Foucault's analysis of the surveillance of birthrates in relation to the health of a country, he centers an important question: under modern capitalism, who controls sexuality, its function, and its outcome?

Again, I call on Lugones to historicize the surveillance and contextualize the violence embedded in this particular surveillance. Lugones states, "The colonial 'civilizing mission' was the euphemistic mask of brutal access to people's bodies through unimaginable exploitation, violent sexual violation, control of reproduction, and systemic terror…." (Lugones, 744). The institutions of slavery and colonization continuously exploited the black and colonized female reproductive system. The children that colonized women and enslaved black women conceive translate into the colonizer's language, not as human but as chattel. Their reproduction, meaning their offspring, does not have the capabilities or potential for human advancement. Therefore, their kin are viewed as goods rather than humans. These historical facts are essential when analyzing discourses surrounding sexuality, reproduction,

the compulsory, and labor. Within the context of this history, what happens when women of color flirt, fuck, and taunt their way into controlling their bodies, sexuality, and labor?

B. Chicana Feminism, Black Feminism, and Third World Feminism

Another crucial aspect of Lugones' framework speaks directly to the historical implications of women of color's bodies in relation to wealth, capital, white women, and sexuality. Lugones' interventions on gender hierarchy speak to relational factors influencing white bourgeois women and their personal expression of sexuality. The standards to which white women's sexuality, white bourgeois women, are held crucially sets the tone for understanding the interpretation of women of color's bodies. According to Lugones, white bourgeois women are exemplified as model women throughout all forms of sexual expression, reproductive and physical.

Hierarchizing Sexualities

Lugones understands white bourgeois women's sexuality to be relational to women of color's sexuality as follows:

> Historically, the characterization of white European women as fragile and sexually passive opposed them to nonwhite, colonized women, including female slaves, who were characterized along a gamut of sexual aggression and perversion, and as strong enough to do any sort of labor. For example, slave women performing backbreaking work in the U.S. South were not considered fragile or weak. (Lugones, 202)

Lugones emphasizes the extent to which women of color are dehumanized. Women of color have not been categorized as fully human, and this is a strategic categorization to maximize the exploitation of people of color. This is a strategic categorization because it allows for specified exploitation. For example, by dehumanizing women of color, there is a way to exploit

sexualities and labor separately based on racial categorization. If white women's reproduction is privileged because of their ability to reproduce pure white children, then their exploitation is categorically different. Their unpaid reproductive and domestic labor allows for capital to be reproduced seamlessly. However, women of color are dehumanized to squeeze every droplet of labor. Lugones references histories of enslaved women being categorized as without gender to maximize the labor that could be extracted from them. The categories for how women of color can be exploited expand beyond male or female binaries. Their reproductive sexualities are exploited to expand capital, and their physical labor is also de-gendered to maximize profits. This dehumanization and hierarchization are essential to preserving Whiteness and protecting Eurocentric ideology and capitalism. Dehumanization allows for white sexuality to exist as a powerful entity. It also disables women of color from existing as women, and they are instead reduced to being marked as without gender—commodities.

Intersectionality

The hierarchization of sexualities that I refer to in the previous section is also described by the term intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the fact that women of color are subjected to multiple sources of oppression at once. Black feminists and U.S. Third World feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins first named how first-wave feminisms did not fully address the multiple identities of women of color (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000). Kimberlé Crenshaw identified how the legal system often overlooked women with multiple identities, such as black women, who deal with multiple forms of oppression. This framework helps to address the practical issues that racialized women face While Lugones gives a historical framework, Kimberlee Crenshaw provides a critical legal framework for understanding intersections of oppression and how the law works to deprioritize people with multiple

identities and the material realities they face (Crenshaw, 1995). Her term, intersectionality, allows for a close reading of structures of inequality and how they have the potential to work together to enhance multiple oppressions at once. Intersectionality makes sense of the constant attack on working-class Latina women who utilize their aesthetics and sexuality as cultural labor in exchange for living wages and other social capital. Albeit it, even if it is simply pleasure. I borrow intersectionality as a framework in this dissertation to name the various ways that even within Latina communities, various identities deprivilege Latinas who are viewed as identifying with the "non-humanness" that they are supposed to reject. For example, Latinas who choose to partake in sex work or find joy and meaning in being hypersexualized are faced with an added layer of oppression, such as social death for their willing association with the sex trades.

Aída Hurtado documents power relations between white men and other groups, stating, "Each oppressed group in the United States is positioned in a particular and distinct relationship to white men, and this relational position shapes each subordination" (Hurtado, 1996). Hurtado documents the relational nature of femininities within power structures in the United States. Hurtado's work details the complexities of these power relations specific to race and gender. She also notes the unspoken process of racialization that occurs within the context of relational femininities, which is a direct result of coloniality. Hurtado details relational femininities and the proximity to power, or white men, associated with many femininities. I put Hurtado's definition in conversation with Lugones because Lugones outlines a hierarchy that reflects access to humanity based on the proximity to white men and humanness.

Women's bodies who cannot reproduce (i.e., trans women and other women who cannot reproduce or refuse to reproduce) are devalued and violently challenged under a

capitalist framework because these bodies threaten heterosexuality, which is closely tied to capital(ism).[1] In the case of white women, the absolute necessity for purity is explained through Lugones' understanding of white bourgeois women's relationship to white bourgeois men. She states, "The European bourgeois woman was not understood as his complement, but as someone who reproduced race and capital through sexual purity, passivity, and being homebound in the service of the white, European, bourgeois man." (Lugones, 2007) Her reproduction of white men gains her proximity to power in a way unavailable to women of color. Yet, as I will explain in chapter one, Latina sexualities serve a crucial component of desire, and while their reproductive and sexual labor is not utilized in the ways that white women's is, there is an important distinction that should be noted.

Catholicism

The role of Catholicism is crucial in our understanding of Chicana/Latina sexuality. Chicana feminists document the relationship between La Virgen de Guadalupe and sexual expressions[2]. Chicana sociologist, Patricia Zavella, documents the navigation between sexuality and catholic upbringings through her explorations of silence. In "*Talkin' Sex,"* Zavella explores the inherent shame associated with the body and the euphemisms learned to discuss pleasure. Aída Hurtado's work in *Voicing Chicana Feminisms* documents the complicated relationship many Chicanas face when addressing issues of religion and sexual expression in the home while balancing outside perceptions of Latina sexuality. Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, and Cherrie Moraga have long understood the role of the Catholic

[1] This relates specifically to Adrienne Rich's understanding of the ways in which women's bodies and labor are understood as inherently belonging to men—quoted earlier in this paper (Rich 228) see also Silvia Federici "Caliban and the Witch"

[2] For more on how Chicanas have re-venerated La Virgen de Guadalupe see Alma Lopez & Alicia Gaspar de Alba and Inés Hernández-Ávila & Norma Elia Cantú.

Church as a significant venue for self-surveillance and inherent shame surrounding sexuality. This aspect of religion is historically significant because it allows the contextualization of The Cult of Virginity and the role of religion in ideologies of ownership of one's body.

The Catholic Church becomes a venue for embedding virginity as capital. Through the work of Gloria Gonzalez Lopez, we see the ways in which virginity as a Catholic concept continuously evolves and exists as a larger entity. Gonzalez Lopez documents, through her ethnography on immigrant's sex lives, how virginity is understood as a commodity, similar to the ways enslavement and colonization introduced sexuality. An important aspect of Gonzalez Lopez's work is that she argues that it is not simply Catholicism but an entire social system that teaches women and men to value virginity as a form of social capital (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005). Through this social system, which I argue can be explained through Lugones' Colonial Modern Gender System, Gonzalez Lopez introduces the concept of Capital Femenino (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005), which explains how women and men assign a higher or lower value to a woman's premarital virginity. Gonzalez Lopez emphasizes socioeconomic conditions in the context of Mexico; however, virginity as social capital is historically connected to white femininity and the inheritance of wealth in a modern capitalist context. Virginity is directly tied to purity in religion and the iconography of La Virgen de Guadalupe, a virginal figure who, despite her sexual purity, became a mother. The impossibility of Latina sexualities is born from the metaphorical expectations to be a perfect mother and an asexual being. Yet Chicana/Latina subjectivity has been constructed through a lens of sexual desire. Therefore, Latinas are left to make sense of their cultural expectations while various meanings about their bodies are concurrently created.

Gonzalez Lopez's work directly speaks to Chicana feminist scholarship on sexuality (Hurtado, 2003; Zavella, 2003). A long genealogy documenting gender and sexual subordination for Latina women exists within the literature. (Perez, 1996; Hurtado; 1997; Trujillo, 1998; Hurtado; 2003; Trujillo, 2003). There is much research documenting how Chicanas/Latinas navigate tensions within a hetero-patriarchal family system. Yet, little research seriously considers how Latinas navigate multiple layers of imposed ideas of sexuality while choosing to embody hypersexuality. Hypersexuality is often disciplined through the image of La Virgen; adolescent girls are regularly surveilled to ensure that they are not trespassing into realms of inappropriateness (Garcia, 2012). Often Chicanas/Latinas are held to standards of white femininity, their embodiments are read as excessive compared to white femininity. Their sexualities are understood as "other" because Whiteness has been the metric.

White Femininity

The value of white femininity, as outlined by Hurtado (1996) and others, directly connects to Lugones' understanding of white femininity. The value of white femininity is directly correlated to white women's reproductive ability to conceive pure, white children[3]. The obsession with virtue and fertility is also tied to her moral responsibility to protect Whiteness through antimiscegenation. To understand moral panics about sex and sexuality, we must understand the legacies by which white women's sexual purity is highly necessary. The crux of my argument, while focusing on the role of Latina sexualities in the accumulation of wealth, is also dependent on understanding how white femininity is valued within the system of capitalism. Sexualities exist within a hierarchy, and white women's sexualities are at the pinnacle. White women's agency and power is understood as a relational agreement between

[3] An exploration of "The Cult of Virginity" may be beneficial here in terms of connecting to Black Studies and inheritance (how historically, white women's need to be pure is directly connected to inheritance and capital)

their body and the reproduction of Whiteness. Her proximity to Whiteness allows for a level of protection, she is granted humanity based on her relationship to white men. Lugones addresses the complexities surrounding the human/non-human dichotomy, allowing the reader to understand the ways in which women of color are characterized as animalistic and subordinate, being nonhuman in relation to white women (human). She begins,

> It is part of their history that only white bourgeois women have consistently counted as women so described in the West. Females excluded from that description were not just their subordinates. They were also understood to be animals in a sense that went further than the identification of white women with nature, infants, and small animals. They were understood as animals in the deep sense of "without gender," sexually marked as female but without the characteristics of femininity (Lugones, 202-203).

White women's proximity to white men grants them access to the "human" realm. Historically, white women's gender and sexuality have been the crux of colonialism and imperialism. Their sexualities index a particularly valuable component: the literal reproduction of white men. However, white women have also served empire by representing an iconicity associated with vulnerability and a need to protect. White women are the physical embodiment that excuses and justifies violence in the name of protection. An example of this phenomenon is Sunny Xiang's reading of the bikini in Pearl S. Buck's 1959 play *Desert Incident*. Xiang argues that the representation of white women's sexuality served as a visual economy to decentralize the harm and violence inflicted by the nuclear war on the Pacific.[4] White women's sexuality legitimizes U.S. atomic power and, more broadly, U.S. imperialist projects. By making white women into a fragile category of femininity, protection becomes a primary force toward

[4] For more on how white women's sexuality aided in U.S. imperialist projects in the Pacific see Xiang & Voyles

expansion. Femininities are relational, and understanding how white women's bodies and sexualities are constructed further explicates how women of color are categorized within the visual economies of femininities used toward the goals of imperialism.

Chicanas/Latinas are categorically different than white women because colonization introduced a new system that marks racialized women as "without gender." White women are the picture of femininity, and therefore, women of color are comparatively seen as excessive and dangerous. Women of color have the potential to harm the pureness of white femininity. Devalued for their inability to reproduce white children. Yet, Chicanas/Latinas are often held to white femininity standards without access to the "human" realm. These inconsistencies create great contradictions and split realities for Latinas. Previous scholarship on Latina sexualities has not sufficiently captured this complicated connection to political economy and how hierarchies of sexualities are organized and disciplined according to this history. When I discuss femininities and sexualities, I do so with an understanding of how these hierarchies of femininities are directly connected to legacies of U.S. imperialism and dominance over the Global South.

Like coloniality, literature in black feminist thought has outlined the relationship between the black body and the accumulation of wealth in relation to the period of enslavement. More specifically, the Prison Industrial Complex outlines yet another form of women of color's reproductive labor benefitting the state through the disproportionate mass incarceration of men of color and hyper-criminalization (Huggins, 1977; Wilson Gilmore, 2007; Miller-Young, 2014). The state historically has served as the ultimate exploitative employer, gaining access to bodies, labor, and implanting ideologies which further separate ownership of the body and sexuality specifically. I bring this connection up here to really

emphasize the multitude of ways that sexualities are categorized and exploited to benefit economic systems. We must think critically, particularly in Chicana and Chicano Studies and Latinx Studies, about how sexuality is directly connected to political economy.

C. Labor, Sexuality, Sex Work Studies, and Queer Theory

Sex Work as Work

As previously noted, an analysis of women's labor cannot be decoupled from an analysis on sex work. Sex workers and sex work activists have long emphasized the "work" in sex work and heavily critique scholarship that loses focus by emphasizing morality associated with sexual commerce. Juno Mac and Molly Smith facilitate an important conversation questioning the role of work as good or bad. By centering questions of labor as good or bad, Mac and Smith shed light on the exploitative nature of all labor (Mac & Smith, 2018). The fight for sex work to be recognized as work has historically been set aside in favor of conversations of agency, coercion, violence, and trafficking. While these issues are prevalent in sex work, it is important to emphasize the role of labor within these contexts and to fight for sex workers' rights and the overall recognition of women's labor as work. Through a structural understanding of poverty, sexism, and homophobia, Mac and Smith urge the scholarship toward recognizing exploitation and danger associated with the labor in streetwalking[5].

Primitive Accumulation

Karl Marx's foundational theorization of capital has laid the foundation for political economists theorizing labor and capital accumulation. A major contribution from Marx comes from what he called "primitive accumulation." Primitive accumulation is the initial product or material by which capital is built. To build capital, one must have a foundation or material to

[5] streetwalking in a term referring to outdoor sexual commerce, usually sex workers who stand on streets looking for clients

profit from. Marx describes slave labor as primitive accumulation, stolen to build immeasurable capital. Marx's contributions to understanding labor have created an entire subarea within political economy to understand workers' material conditions. However, Marxist thought has received considerable criticism for failing to include a multilayered analysis that contends that gender oppression is integral to building capital and that the "workplace" is blurred in the public/private dichotomy. The home, often made invisible in conversations about labor, is a crucial site to understand divisions of labor. The separation of public versus private domains aid in naturalizing feminized labor, such as child rearing, domestic labor, and emotional labor. All forms of labor crucial for the reproduction of happy, capable workers. Marxist feminists have taken on the task of addressing how gender is integral to how we understand political economy and how capital is accumulated. For instance, Italian Marxist feminist Silvia Federici's work on capitalism and women's labor emphasizes the long history of feminized labor being unrecognized and insidiously integrated into capitalist models. Federici names domestic labor as a crucial primitive accumulation, a prerequisite for capital accumulation.

Furthermore, the naturalization of domestic work, childbearing labor, and childcare as in abundance and, more importantly, free or without cost aids in the continued subordination of women (Federici, 2004). Federici, then, provides a historical understanding of how capitalism depends on the erasure of feminized labor, and when that labor is reclaimed by women, oftentimes, they are met with resistance, criminalization, and unreasonable regulations. Thinking about primitive accumulation is especially helpful for my argument because racialized femininities and sexualities are a form of primitive accumulation that aid in building U.S. empire. I find Federici's reading of primitive accumulation helpful because it lends a

framework for understanding how sexuality is a form of primitive accumulation. More specifically, how the construction of racialized sexualities creates desire and that desire is a form of primitive accumulation. If sexualities are constructed, and as I've outlined above, a historical process connected to colonization, then desire for those sexualities serves a specific function for empire. So, desire itself is necessary, and being desired or desirable helps expand empire. However, I am interested in naming how the practice of sex and the process of desire is integral to global accumulation processes. In chapter one, I take on the task of explaining how desire is connected to global capitalism and the legacies of imperialism.

Sex Work Studies

Sex work studies illuminates an area of study that interrogates the criminalization of sex work. Sex worker activists illuminate how the State is an active agent in the control of sexuality as a commercial category. For instance, Elizabeth Bernstein centers streetwalkers in the San Francisco area as her work uncovers the structural circumstances of sexual commerce. Bernstein's work traces the historical legacies of gentrification and sex work, detailing the connections between capital interest and the regulation of sex work. Bernstein's contributions not only tell of the physical threat streetwalkers face, but her works also expose the complicit relationship the State facilitates with sex workers, development, and police. Her findings highlight the criminalization of sex work as an intricate connection to gentrification, women's access to labor, and poverty. Although the dangers of streetwalking are vastly different and more urgent than those in webcamming, the online webcamming industry also exposes issues of labor and structural inequality. Angela Jones argues that webcam models should be seen as sex workers who perform erotic labor in a highly competitive capitalist marketplace—which is like other forms of feminized service work such as serving in restaurants, domestic work,

etc., because it involves providing good customer service and often requires managing both one's own emotions and those of clients.

As previously noted, sexuality and labor cannot be decoupled when discussing women of color. Mireille Miller-Young utilizes the body and work of Jeannie Pepper as a case study to illustrate the specific racialized and gendered obstacles and emotional labor specific to black women's sexuality. Miller-Young uses the body as a point of entry for analysis to speak to the ways in which a specific collective racial trauma is continuously communicated through racialized bodies in pornography. Miller-Young explains how black women's bodies are marked. The body carries historical markings of exploitation, sexual and otherwise (Miller-Young, 2014). Her conjuring of collective racial trauma allows the reader to understand how black women cannot escape this form of racialized sexualization. She states,

> As a metaphor, brown sugar exposes how black women's sexuality, or more precisely, their sexual labor, has been historically embedded in culture and the global economy. Now a key component of the profitable industries of entertainment and sex in the United States, brown sugar played a central role in the emergence of Western nation-states and capitalist economies. (Miller-Young, 4)

Her use of brown sugar as a metaphor exposes the embedded exploitation in the foundation of or the creation of black women's sexuality within a Western/modern capitalist context. Her interventions speak directly to the importance of historicizing sexuality and the inescapable tropes imposed on the bodies of women of color. I want to emphasize that the construction of

sexualities are directly connected to how desires for economic expansion manifest. These processes vary based on racialization processes.[6]

Similarly, Myra Mendible explores the relationship between Carmen Miranda's body and the production of bananas, along with U.S. relations with Latin America. Mendible outlines the strategic use of Miranda's ethnically sexualized body, stating,

> At the height of Miranda's U.S. popularity, the largest grower and marketer of bananas, United Fruit Company, created the half-banana, half-woman cartoon character, Chiquita Banana. Modeled on Miranda's lavish reinterpretation of the Brazilian market woman, this feminized banana served as a "friendly face" of the company seen by American housewives. (Mendible, 2008)

Miranda's body signals excessive sexuality used to market the plentiful bananas produced and exported from Latin America via La United Fruit Company. Mendible's work exposes the strategic forms in which capitalist entities coopt and utilize sexuality for larger profits. This project seeks to document how Latinas are active laborers who flirt with, taunt, and play with these power dynamics.

Miller-Young goes further by complicating assumptions of representation. Her work challenges ideas surrounding agency, racial trauma, and pleasure. Along with a history of violence inflicted on black women through the metaphor of brown sugar, Miller-Young further negotiates sexual desire, agency, and triumph. She argues the ways in which black women porn stars utilize their racialized/gendered bodies to fit specific sexual tropes. Miller-Young succinctly details the strategic maneuvering of sexuality and sexual practice utilized by black

[6] While I did not have time to include an understanding of how Asian women's sexualities are constructed similarly to black women and Latinas, my plan is to expand my reading of imperialism to include a reading of legacies of U.S. imperialism in countries in Asia.

women in pornography to secure financial capital. She coins the term "illicit eroticism," stating:

> Jeannie Pepper shows us how black women—particularly sex workers—mobilize what I term "illicit eroticism" to advance themselves in adult entertainment's sexual economy. Actively confronting the taboo nature and fraught history of black female sexuality, black sex workers pursue a prohibited terrain of labor and performance. Illicit eroticism provides a framework to understand the ways in which black women put hypersexuality to use. (Miller-Young, 10)

The political work Miller-Young is documenting directly challenges assumptions of agency within the context of The Colonial Modern Gender System. The manipulation of the inescapable racist, classist, sexist, and homophobic discourse and ideology embedded in modern capitalism grants agency for venues of pleasure and a more egalitarian exchange of goods (the racialized and gendered body) for service (sexuality/sexualization). Her direct analysis of capital(ism) within the context of black women's sexuality is essential to understanding the accumulation of wealth and erotic capital accessible to racialized/gendered/hypersexualized bodies. (Miller-Young, 2014)

Studies on sex work and pornography are critical of agency in all forms of sex work and shed light on the inherent coercion in all forms of labor. Kimberly Kay Hoang's study on Vietnamese sexual economies details the intricate relationships sex workers have with the industry and how they utilize their clients to further their business endeavors and ensure their families are well taken care of (Hoang, 2015). The knowledge of the participants of Hoang's study illustrates a sophisticated understanding of their position in relation to masculinity; in other words, the participants are aware of how their positionality as subordinated women can

ultimately grant them more access to monetary compensation. Felicity Amaya Schaeffer similarly documents how women participating in cybermarriages in Latin America are willing to negotiate their subjectivity in exchange for multiple forms of compensation, including migration as upward mobility (Schaeffer, 2013).

Sex tourism is another venue where the literature illustrates how women utilize their racialized subordinated positions to gain more access to capital. Megan Rivers-Moore's work on masculinity and value in sex tourism illustrates how sex workers in San José, Costa Rica, interact with sex tourists. Although Rivers-Moore focuses on the relationships and masculinizing practices between sex tourists, many respondents reported the dynamics of their relationships with Costa Rican women. Their perceptions of Costa Rican women, like Schaeffer's work, note the ways in which the sex workers themselves manipulate preconceived ideas about their subjectivities to get men to spend more money on them (Rivers-Moore, 2012; Schaeffer, 2013).

Gesture and Everyday Embodiments of Desire

This complex relationship documented by masculinity scholars relates specifically to Miller-Young's understanding of Illicit Eroticism. While Illicit Eroticism is specific to her context of pornography and sex industries, I argue that the hypersexuality found in pornography exists beyond the lens. It is imprinted on the body by history. For instance, Celine Parreñas Shimizu's study on Asian American women in film defines a particular process of sexualization that happens for Asian American women. Asian women's existence is already entangled with sexual desire because of the legacies of U.S. imperialism in Asian countries that make their sexualities desirable and excessive. Parreñas Shimizu outlines how at any

moment in time, Asian women can be understood as hypersexual subjects (Parreñas Shimizu, 2007).

Similarly, the Puerto Rican author Judith Ortiz Cofer's non-fiction essay "The Myth of the Latin Woman" emphasizes how "the island travels with you." She describes an instance while traveling in the United Kingdom and being harassed on a bus by a man referring to her as "Maria" and singing snippets of "Maria" from *Westside Story*. Cofer theorizes that moment as her body carrying legacies of U.S. imperialism and desire even as she travels away from Puerto Rico[7]. The body is a vessel of these histories. I want to complicate these facts in Latina sexualities studies because I do not want to position this process as solely something that happens to Latinas. Instead, I am interested in documenting how this historical process is a conversation, and that Latinas often choose to invoke these stereotypes for various reasons.

Everyday interactions hold the potential for accumulating erotic capital and upward social mobility for racialized/gendered/hypersexualized bodies. The manipulation of ideologies Miller-Young documents through her work speak directly to the gestures utilized by people of color. Gloria Anzaldúa discusses similar notions of political subversive gestures utilized as survival tactics to empower women of color and marginalized people. Her concept of "haciendo caras" (Anzaldúa, 1990) outlines the shapeshifting abilities inherent in women of color and other marginalized groups. Her connection of "haciendo caras" as a survival tactic is a foundational framework for understanding everyday interactions as political. The gestures produced and manipulated by racialized gendered bodies illustrate the inherent nature of survival and the cooptation of ideological tropes imposed on sexuality.

[7] For more on Cofer's writing see *The Latin Deli*

Juana María Rodríguez, similar to Anzaldúa, introduces the concept of embodied gestures. Rodríguez identifies a social system that assigns cultural meanings to specific bodies. She states, "Thinking about queerness through gesture animates how bodies move in the world and how we assign meaning in the ways that are always already infused with cultural modes of knowing." (Rodríguez, 2014, 2) The infusion Rodríguez alludes to speaks directly to the theoretical frameworks provided by coloniality and Chicana feminists. Therefore, within these imposed or infused ways of knowing, strategic forms of embodied gestures create a venue for political work. Rodríguez states, "As a mode of critique, gesture emphasizes how a cascade of everyday actions can alter political life. As a way of articulating political action, gesture highlights intentions, process, and practice over objectives and certainty." (Rodríguez, 2014, 5) This framework makes political work accessible to gendered and racialized bodies within modern capitalism's context by embodying hypersexualization and excessive sexuality. Understanding everyday gestures of difference and resistance as politically significant changes the discourse and framework of Latina sexualities as harmful to instead a multi-dimensional reading of power.

Rodríguez flirts with our understanding of corporeality and proper corporeal containment. Her "Latin@s" and queer context exposes the gendered racialized body as excess. Her understanding of these specific racialized gendered bodies as inherently excessive and relational exposes the relationship between bodies under a specific context. Gestures constantly communicate with fixed assumptions infused with our cultural modes of knowing. Racialized excess, she argues, is a form of embodied gesture that challenges gender specifically. She says:

> Our racialized excess is already read as queer, outside norms of what is useful or productive. (Is that much color, spice, pattern, noise ever truly necessary?) Forever tacky, the viscosity of our excess grates across the surfaces we touch. As sissies, butches, and spectacles of high-femme fabulousness, we produce gendered performances of overt desire that rouse discomfort. (Rodríguez, 2)

Her connection to productivity aligns with Lugones' understanding of the body within The Colonial Modern Gender System. Within the context of modern capitalism, the excess is read as unproductive, therefore leading to uncomfortableness. However, this uncomfortable form is strategically employed through gesture, erotic capital, and the body. Rodríguez introduces a theoretical framework that can be applied to understanding the manipulation of modern capitalism as a hypersexualized, gendered, and racialized body.

This project is also informed by José Esteban Muñoz's understanding of disidentifications: its political function and how it relates to autonomy. Disidentifications become crucial for my understanding of navigating imposed hypersexualization. Muñoz utilizes Althusser's notion of inescapable ideology and identifies disidentifications as a site that "tries to transform a cultural logic from within…" (Muñoz, 1999). The transformation of cultural logic is the space where transgressive narratives exist. Where they organize and strategize forms of liberation. But what if we imagine a Queer Utopia where racialized sexuality is inherently recognized as labor and sex workers are merely subjects who have accumulated ways of "seeing"[8] historical sexual marginalization? Where they have created technologies to flirt, to fuck, and taunt what they've seen without exposing their sophisticated

[8] Reference to "They Live", a science fiction film set in 1980s Los Angeles

understanding of the social order?[9] Through sex workers' labor and putting their bodies on the line against poverty, inequality, and capitalism, sex workers have normalized sex work discourse in the mainstream. As previously noted, I argue that sex work studies cannot be decoupled from any project on women's labor.

Sex Worker Discourse and the Cyborg

Sex Worker Discourse, which I describe in detail in chapter one, unapologetically demands the compensation of labor that has been erased, dissolved like brown sugar, silenced, and made to be understood only through cryptic code. Sex Worker Discourse articulates a complicated understanding of how racialized sexuality is a historical process tied to imperialist desire and imposed ideas of sexualities. However, I also want to note that this articulation is strategically conscious of how sexualities are made desirable and how to profit and exert sexual agency and pleasure while navigating structural powers of inequality.

Chela Sandoval speaks to us of revolutionary technologies that guide my understanding of labor. Sandoval outlines the technologies of revolutionary change that guide us through unveiling the silences introduced by Coloniality. She identifies revolutionary spaces (third space) legible to U.S. Third World Women of Color. Differential consciousness is a revolutionary tool accessed through the third space, the fragmented, and the silences. It is the intergalactic mode of transportation. Between the real and the unreal, accessed through puncturing the force field of ideology into an unrecognizable abyss—the-no place. Sandoval describes,

> Differential consciousness is linked to whatever is not expressible through words. It is accessed through poetic modes of expression: gestures, music, images, sounds, words

[9] For more on th radical possibilities of Queer Utopia and futurity, see Muñoz *Cruising Utopia*

> that plummet or rise through signification to find some void—some no-place—to claim their due. This mode of consciousness both inspires and depends on differential social movements and the methodology of the oppressed and its differential technologies, yet it functions outside speech, outside academic criticism, in spite of all attempts to pursue and identity its place and origin. (Sandoval, 140)

The Differential Labor noted in Sandoval's work is similar to Miller-Young's metaphor of brown sugar. Differential Labor is utilized to read the social order, to read histories of exploitation, and to access revolutionary technologies that allow women of color pleasure, power, and ownership of their sexuality and labor.

Sandoval continues, "What I have previously identified as 'differential consciousness,' 'la consciencia de la mestiza,' the 'abyss,' the 'zero degree,' or the 'third meaning' represents an infinitely extending, internally controlling yet unruly power that Derrida designates *différénce*." (Sandoval, 148). This difference, this access to understanding, is a practice of perception that has the potential to shift the real, and distinguish it from the unreal. She continues:

> Both Derrida and Barthes agree that this differential power has remained 'silent' and eluded 'vision and hearing' within Western cultural orders. But a new 'practice of perception' can permit citizen-subjects to identify this form of consciousness and activity. And indeed, this new practice of perception can refer citizen-subjects 'happily,' Derrida continues, to a new cultural and political order (137). (Sandoval, 148)

This perception practice exists within the body of the racialized, hypersexualized subject. She exists, like the cyborg. Caught between social reality and fiction. The outlier. The bad subject. The cyborg. A term that Harraway "uses in order to describe and ensure the development of a revolutionary form of human being, a creature who lives in both 'social reality' and 'fiction,' and who performs and speaks in a 'middle voice' that is forged in the amalgam of technology and biology—a cyborg-poet." (Sandoval, 167)[10] A monstrous figure within the enclosure of ideology. She is treacherous. Dangerous. Her body should not be trusted because she has gained access to "seeing" and has now demanded compensation for historical legacies of invisible labor. I want to be clear, though, that when I describe this reading of the cyborg, I think about the cyborg as a consciousness that ruptures and moves through multiple realities. I rely on Sandoval's reading of the Cyborg poet to make sense of this sex worker consciousness. I understand "realities" as the social constructions we all learn to navigate.

Like Cyborg Femininity, work in black feminists thought and porn studies have outlined our understandings of sexual deviance. While deviance is constantly under attack within a capitalist system, sex work and other feminized labor are constantly surveilled. So then, what happens when the hypersexualized subject demands compensation? When she speaks against her inherent exploitation? Miller-Young's "Ho Theory" framework guides this project in answering questions about sex work, cultural labor, and racialized femininity. "As public women who use sex for their own interests (be they profit or pleasure) rather than the reproduction of the racial community, hoes are not only outside of black respectability politics; they are utterly loathed." (Miller-Young, 2014, 163)

[10] I want to be very clear about my use of the term "Cyborg". I am interested in expanding Chela Sandoval's reading of Harraway's "Cyborg" which is an understanding of how women of color have developed revolutionary technologies through their ruptured consciousness to navigate multiple layers of power. The Cyborg in this case, can read through encrypted social codes about proper uses of sexuality.

"Flirting with Sexual Economies," at its core, is a project on racialized femininity, labor, and sexuality with a Sex Worker and Work Studies lens; this dissertation seeks to center sex work as a pivotal entryway to understanding embodied forms of racialized labor and sexuality as commerce.

Chapter Outline

In chapter one, "Building The Latina Body: Creating Desire," I argue that through a decolonial understanding of gender, sexual labor is always already owned by the State, and therefore, sex workers are highly criminalized for "stealing" sexual labor that does not belong to them. I also illustrate through a historical public policy analysis that Latina sexualities have been critical components of intrusive foreign policy between the U.S. and Latin American countries. To situate this argument, I analyze U.S. transnational trade agreements that position Latin American countries as desirable. I argue that sexual economies provide fundamental insight into understanding how U.S. imperialism creates markets of desire that ultimately work to stabilize national economies that have otherwise been destabilized by globalization and imperialist projects.

In chapter two, "Spicy Mami, Hot Tamale: Cardi B and Sex Worker Discourse," I analyze Afro-Latina rap artist Cardi B and her social media presence as a former dancer in New York City. I conducted a discourse analysis of her video narratives on the social media platform Instagram to theorize her explicit sex worker discourse through her lived experience as a Black Latina woman. I note how she signals Black Latinidad and desire through her work to disrupt notions of respectable femininity and signal an often-incomprehensible defiance of gendered labor. I situate this argument to understand the intersections between her identities as a Black Latina and a former sex worker, identities that are often met with hostility. In this

chapter, I conduct a discourse analysis of an infamous fight at the 2016 VH1 *Love & Hip Hop: New York* reunion special, where Cardi B and veteran rapper Peter Gunz engage in a fight. I theorize this spectacle of epistemic violence from Peter Gunz as an embodied response of violence and disgust to what I call a Sex Worker Discourse, the reclamation of sexual labor.

In the third chapter, "Flirting, Fucking, And Taunting: Latinas Speak Back About Labor on OnlyFans," I look to digital sex workers on subscription-based websites like Onlyfans.com to analyze the surveillance mechanisms of online pornography. I interview Latinas who sell content online to understand how they navigate their gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and national identities in their work. My qualitative interview data with online sex workers has generated new questions about Latina racialized aesthetics. For example, the women in my study emphasize the laborious aspects of aesthetics and their expenses in successfully portraying The Latina Body. They have highlighted various industries of interest, such as home-based Latina nail technicians, body modification through cosmetic surgeries, and new non-invasive technology for body contouring. These aesthetic industries help Latinas accomplish the "look" of The Latina Body while also creating beauty industries that allow Latina entrepreneurs to work from home on their own terms.

In chapter four, "Why are all the Webcam Models Colombian?" I interrogate how racialized sexual economies are necessary to penetrate Latin American countries such as Colombia successfully. I merge Sex Work Studies with Latin American Studies because this requires us to address the role of sex and desire in how the U.S. navigates and justifies invasive policy. My dissertation data has generated new research questions that will allow for the expansion into multiple journal articles and a book manuscript. I plan to expand this chapter on how the U.S. and Colombia's economic relationship affects Colombia's sexual economies.

Colombia produces the second-highest number of adult webcam models per capita globally and has become a hub for online sex work. While the U.S. and Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement removed tariffs and destabilized Colombia's economy, a desire for Colombian women as online sexual companions has stabilized local economies and kept people employed. For example, during the onset of *COVID-19*, large hotels closed to tourism were converted into large webcam studios, staffed not only by webcam models but also by administrative and housekeeping staff.

Chapter One

Building The Latina Body: Creating Desire
Flirting with, Fucking, and Taunting Legacies of U.S. Imperialism

The monster is transgressive, too sexual, perversely erotic, a lawbreaker; and so the monster and all that it embodies must be exiled or destroyed.

--Jeffrey Jerome Cohen

Occupying two realities in this way is a kind of quantum mechanics.

--Sovereign Syre

The Gang's All Here is a 1943 American Twentieth Century Fox Technicolor musical film starring Carmen Miranda. *The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat,* a musical number in the movie, opens with a scan of an extravagant live band. The band plays for an enthusiastic audience, filled with white people dressed in luxurious gowns and tuxedos. The camera follows a short, round, brown man wearing a relaxed white suit and a red scarf around his neck as he walks through the crowd. He carries a music box with a monkey in a matching suit. The monkey playfully jumps from the man's shoulder to shoulder and then back onto the music box. The short brown man approaches the stage with a cutout of a banana tree ripe with bright yellow fruit. He places his music box near the banana tree and off goes the monkey into the abundance of fruit. The profusion of yellow bananas overwhelms the camera shot, exposing several isles of banana trees, each bursting with ripe fruit. An elevated image unveils white women laying over cutouts of the earth, one woman for each banana tree.

Sprawled across the floor, perfectly aligned, wearing yellow tutu skirts. They begin leaping forward with glee as they rush over as The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat approaches. Waving their hands in excitement as the extravagant woman arrives in a banana-filled carriage escorted out by shirtless, muscular, brown men. Her presence enamors everyone; her arrival is

a spectacle of Latina iconicity. Her body is a signifier of the abundance of Latinidad, sexuality, and fertile soil. This iconic performance by Carmen Miranda is a spectacle.

The spectacle is a social relation among people mediated by images (Debord, 1983; Canelo, 2014). The spectacle communicates a particular history using images. For example, Miranda's image and iconography reflect the social relations between North and South America. I cite Carmen Miranda at the beginning of this chapter because she embodies the historical formation of social ties between the U.S. and Latin American countries through a lens of desire. Miranda exemplifies how sexual desire and a desire for natural resources, such as bananas, are conflated and sold on the global stage through film, media, and popular culture. Miranda's embodiment serves as a site of inquiry to understand how Latina sexualities facilitate trade relations between the U.S. and Latin American countries and gives insight into understanding how capital moves, particularly in the Americas. Her image and affective performances of excess are mesmerizing and serve as the inspiration for this research project. Because of the contradictions of her embodiment, not being a Latina herself, she inspires questions about using images and racialized sexualities to extract resources. Still, Miranda's physical embodiment and her career as a performer illustrate a vital tension between embodied performances of excessive sexualized femininities and how these embodiments are put to work in the name of accumulating wealth. A particularly crucial argument must be made of how Latina iconography and spectacle are representatives of the economic relations between the Americas. However, an undertheorized component of Miranda's embodiment is the radical potential of joy in playfully embodying these excessive forms. This chapter is interested in exploring the flirtation between how The Latina Body is constructed to aid in how capital, such as natural resources and racialized sexualities, are extracted from the Americas and how

individuals learn to flirt with these modes of embodiments to find joy, pleasure, and agency as they navigate the dehumanizing economic conditions of the 21st century.

Introducing Carmen Miranda: The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat

Carmen Miranda is a famous Portuguese-Brazilian icon who has been the focal point of feminist political economy theory, particularly in understanding the banana industry. Miranda's image has been analyzed in political economy analysis because her embodiment has been fused with marketing for tropical fruit industries in South America. Miranda's binational success as an actor indicates how the U.S. government put her image to work for corporate expansions into Latin and Central American countries. As a beautiful Latin-inspired performer, Miranda's public persona inspired La United Fruit Company's (now Chiquita Banana) half banana half woman cartoon character. The cartoon mascot was crucial in developing consumer interest in bananas in the U.S. In many ways, the company's mascot indexed racialized desire and a covert desire to extract resources, such as bananas. Miranda was the public face by which policy and economic relationships were forged. Her media image was central in implementing The Good Neighbor Policy as her body became a vessel emphasizing an inclination for resources from Latin American countries (Enloe, 1990; Mendible, 2007).

Miranda's performance in *Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat* exemplifies multiple excessive resources that a global, white audience has been conditioned to long for and desire: bananas and Latina sexualities. In this performance, her body resembles the bountiful land and ripe fruit, so much ripeness that if you do not use it quickly enough, it will be wasted. As scholars have theorized, The Good Neighbor Policy facilitated a paternalistic relationship with Latin American countries. The "too much woman for you" trope coupled with the "too much land for you" policy helped to curate a narrative of control by the U.S. In other words, a ravenous

impulse for imperialist expansion became synonymous with an insatiable desire for The Latina Body.

Introducing Desire and Defining The Latina Body

Cynthia Enloe clarifies that Miranda is packaged and utilized to advance political agendas. She says, "they put Miranda to work bolstering President Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to promote friendlier relations between the United States and Latin America" (Enloe, 2000, p. 7). I begin this analysis with Miranda to exemplify the use of Latinidad as a set of ideas that rely on viewing Latin America as a bountiful geographical region *worth* desiring. This desire is created through the euphemism of what I call, The Latina Body. The Latina Body goes through a specific creation process. There is no "true" Latina body; "The Latina Body" is a collection of ideas, an imaginary physically contained through corporeal representation. It is an imaginary that creates sexual enticement, desire, and salivation. When I refer to The Latina Body, I refer to the body that has undergone a sexualized process—often without consent. The Latina Body is created to embody multiple layers of desire. Latinidad, from its inception, has been a marketing strategy that convolutes an imperialist desire for land and resources with what I am theorizing as a process of creating The Latina Body. U.S. policy often associates Central and South American countries as a hyper-exploitable resource. In naming these countries as ripe with resources, U.S. media campaigns actively work to impose ideologies of excessive sexualities. The construction of Latinidad is always inextricably linked to imperialist desire and conquest.

Defining *Desire*

I define desire as a desire for land—an imperialist thirst for economic exploitation—and a desire for "The Latina Body"—a metaphor enveloped in sexualities of excess

(Hernandez, 2020). The Latina Body is always in conversation with political economy and foreign policy. To conceptualize Latinidad, I suggest s serious consideration of the role of sexualities, desire, anti-Indigeneity, and anti-blackness in the construction of The Latina Body. An essential contribution I make in this chapter is that the U.S.'s construction of Latina sexualities has contributed to the formation and demand for sexual economies. I illuminate the internal contradictions of global capitalism, such as the need to manufacture difference through racialized sexualities in the process of conquest and enslavement to justify violent exploitation. While my analysis begins with an emphasis on imperialism, I aim to create a framework that spells out the interconnections of global economic processes and sex work. I then move to a theoretical inquiry that defines sex worker discourse, or consciousness, and work to imagine emancipatory futures based on a critical awareness of labor, imposed constructions of Latina sexualities, and U.S. trade policy. I posit that sex workers teach us complex forms of reading and navigating power structures rooted in a critical awareness of how labor is organized and policed. The Latina Body is an artificial idea conceived to exert control. However, I propose that embodying and taking on identity markers of The Latina Body work to destabilize harmful gender ideologies and illuminate the dehumanizing conditions that everyday laborers are expected to comply with.

To fully engage and interact with The Latina Body, we must seriously consider what is communicated through the unspoken realm. The spectacle creates meaning through images, and I argue embodiment. What does it mean to embody Latinidad? And how are these embodiments directly tied to a colonial imaginary? Suppose The Latina Body is an embodied colonial fantasy and a manufactured capitalist entity. In that case, The Latina Body is an ideological apparatus or a distinct physical entity permanently attached to myths of excessive

sexuality, an uncontrollable desire, and sensuality. Here, The Latina Body is socially constructed and tied to social relations of domination. I do not separate colonization and recognize the processes of coloniality wedded to the Latina Body and focus on the creation of The Latina Body.

In this chapter, I outline a central argument of this dissertation: Latina sexualities are constructed as excessive and desirable to facilitate and justify invasive trade policies from the U.S. into Latin American countries. These constructed sexualities serve two significant purposes. First, they justify a desire for economic expansion by collapsing the desire to extract resources with a desire for Latina sexualities. In others, Latina sexualities are used to make Latin American resources desirable to everyday consumers. Second, in constructing these excessive sexualities, industries based on racialized sexualities blossom, such as sexual economies. Sexual economies are a product of an imperialist desire for economic expansion.

Justifying *Desire:* The Colonial Modern Gender System and U.S. Ideologies of Imperialism

I want to situate my arguments within a few subfields, of which the most influential is decolonial feminism. María Lugones's theoretical framework of what she called "The Colonial Modern Gender System" documents the way that colonization introduced an entirely new gender system to the Americas–with a critical hierarchical distinction between the human and non-human. The non-human enslaved and colonized people were considered without gender, irrevocably hypersexual and wild, and therefore need to be tamed and controlled. This justified genocide, rape, and dominance over colonized people. This framework helps me understand hypersexualization as a historical process of accumulating land and resources. Relatedly, Marxist feminist scholars have illuminated how capital accumulation relies on an exploitative

gender system. Silvia Federici's work of defining gendered reproductive and domestic labor as primitive accumulation is insightful in understanding that this labor is necessary for capitalism to function.

The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities

Chicana and Black feminists have illuminated how embodiment serves as a significant factor in how we experience racism and sexism as categories of dominance, and it is through this lens that I analyze how sexualities are constructed, desired, and consumed on the global stage. I connect to scholarship on sex tourism, which is traveling with the specific goal of purchasing sexual services. Sex tourism sheds light on the complicated relationship between global economic desire, where leisure travel industries are created for people from the Global North to travel to the Global South and enjoy the bountiful beauty and resources and the sexualities constructed as excessive. Sexual economies, much like luxury hospitality industries, serve travelers searching for respite and pleasure in a constructed playground. Latin American countries are the U.S.'s economic and sexual playground. Tourism economies, including sex tourism, stabilize national economies that globalization has destabilized. These frameworks allow me to piece together what I call the Political Economy of Latina Sexualities. Building on what scholars have analyzed about how Latina iconography and aesthetics are utilized for mass profit in popular culture, art, and media production, I argue for considering how Latina sexualities organize how capital moves, particularly in the Americas.

Flirtation

My theorization of Latina sexualities highlights three levels that Latina sex workers learn to negotiate: 1. Structural global processes, 2. Communal respectability politics, 3.

Individual working conditions and relationships. In *Methodologies of the Oppressed,* Chela Sandoval outlines the sophisticated methodologies women of color call upon to navigate power. Women of color negotiate racialized sexualized tropes in various capacities ranging from pornography work, self-fashioning, and embodiment practices, respectively. I am introducing *flirtation* as a theoretical concept that defines the use of racialized sexuality to manipulate gendered and racialized oppression. *Flirtation* exists on the structural level and through everyday practices of Latina sex workers. *Flirtation* is used here to address Latina embodiment specifically. Latinas are categorized as hyper-fertile, hyper-sexual, and dangerous to the State via over-population. Because they are embedded in social discourses—which rationalize justifications for policies used to control their reproductive abilities, such as sterilization abuse and cuts to welfare. *Flirtation* illuminates how they fuck these systemic inequalities back. *Flirtation* denotes playfulness and agential possibilities.

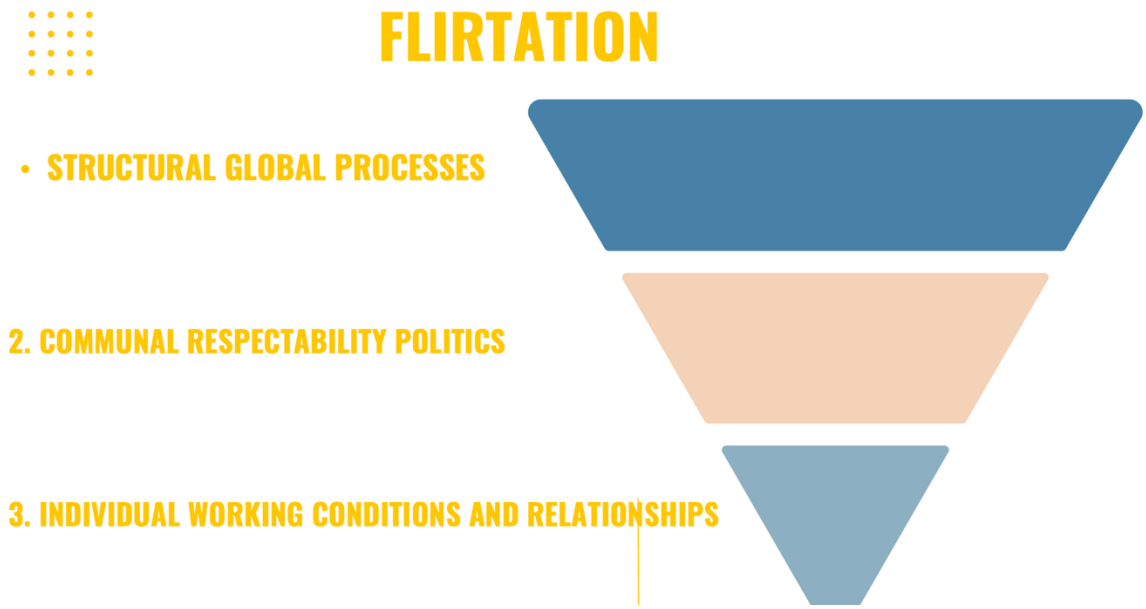

Figure 2.1—"Flirtation"

Although Latina racialized hypersexuality has emerged from discourses and structures of violence, my research uncovers how Latinas may identify with, strategically employ, or find possibility within these types of embodiments. On the one hand, Latinas are tasked with carrying histories of imperialist policies that work to create a market based on desiring their sexual labor; on the other, that same sexual labor is criminalized and rendered shameful by their communities. Latina sex workers begin navigating multiple realities and learn to create new categories of being rooted in a critical awareness of sexual labor. I name this navigational capital "Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness." This consciousness reaches toward liberation and locates racialized sexualities as a methodology and lens for disidentifying, or as Mireille Miller-Young suggests, an opportunity to put "hypersexuality to work" (Muñoz; 1999, Miller-Young; 2015). I am offering a framework that articulates the flirtatious nature of Latina sex workers, who utilize their racialized positions to address surveillance and anxieties about their bodies at these three levels.

Despite the ongoing engagement with Latina sexualities, there is no one true definition of The Latina Body. Instead, The Latina Body communicates through metaphor and the unspoken narratives written on the body. Myra Mendible tells us that "for many women of color in the United States, even a simple act—dancing—is loaded with gendered, racialized baggage; in a single butt-shaking instant, this Latina body can resurrect a history of stereotypes, preconception, and prejudices" (Mendible, 2007, p. 20). The body itself is a vessel of memory and often communicates unspoken categorizations. Then, I ask what legacies are conjured when constructing The Latina Body. Juana María Rodriguez gives us a framework to understand embodiments through her theorization of gesture. She says,

> If it is true that gestures signal the potentialities of our body, they also make public the imprint of our past. Gestures reveal the inscription of social and cultural laws,

> transforming our individual movements into an archive of received social behaviors and norms that reveal how memory and feeling are enacted and transformed through bodily practice. As we produce these affective and deeply political forms of corporeality, we are likewise subjugated through the relations of power that they also expose (Rodriguez, 2014, p. 5).

Gesture is a communication process through the unspoken realm of our bodies' histories. The body is constantly constructed and deconstructed to follow, often challenging cultural and social logic. For The Latina Body, there remains an undertheorized interrogation of the silences the body communicates and how these silences directly reproduce sexualities, economies, and desires associated with Latinidad and processes of erasing blackness.

Applying Decolonial Theory

Decolonial theorists have argued that U.S. imperialism remains connected to legacies of violent colonial histories, enslavement, and a western introduction of a dichotomous hierarchy that classified an essential distinction between human and nonhuman subjects serving to establish and continues to uphold, the U.S. nation-state (Lugones, 2007). U.S. ideologies are birthed through the residue of colonization, justifying violence and exploitation of targeted groups through dehumanization. Decolonial theory offers the study of empire a framework to unearth the historical, political, and cultural residue that permeates our institutions and ideologies. Coloniality, not to be confused with colonization, refers to "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (Maldonado-Torres, 4, 2007). Coloniality is the unseen, unspoken language of imperialist logic that infects our entire ways of being and informs structures of U.S. society. I call upon Coloniality to make sense of the complicated histories ascribed to create The Latina Body.

Colonization introduced a new matrix of power to the Americas and, according to Maria Lugones, introduced a completely new gender system. The Colonial Modern Gender System is a dichotomous hierarchy introduced to classify and distinguish between human and nonhumans. This gender system serves as a basis for how our current power structures continue to justify violent exploitation. Lugones' model on gender illustrates an important hierarchy that is simultaneously dichotomous. Separated by the critical distinction between human and non-human, white heterosexual, land-owning men are considered the exemplary standard of humans, arguably, under this logic and framework, are the only group of people given full humanity.

On the one hand, white women were categorized as less than human, their value contingent on their ability to reproduce pure white children. Their sexual purity is equally crucial so as not to disrupt processes of accumulation and inheritance. Their role as reproducers of wealth granted them proximity to humanness, in limbo between humans and non-humans. However, it is essential to note that their access to full humanity was denied. White women were not allowed full humanity because their reproductive labor, bodily autonomy, and sexualities needed to be exploited. Simultaneously an ideological and physical carceral arm developed to ensure the acceptance of these conditions, i.e., surveillance of women's sexualities (Lugones, 2007; Lugones, 2006). These distinctions were needed to convince white women that their labor did not belong to them because they were not fully human. (This is important because this logic also plays into why sex work as a labor category does not make sense to our legal systems, which I will expand on further later in this chapter). Therefore, white women remained in the in-between social construction of human and non-human, their racial identity conditionally leveraging safety.

On the other hand, women who were enslaved and women who were colonized were irrevocably non-human, their bodies considered entirely out of the frame of humanity. This classification is necessary for the expansion of capital. Black and colonized women were considered non-human to justify insidious ownership of their bodies, and this classification worked to classify them as property rather than human beings. The reasoning behind this is to justify hyper-exploitation and rape. Coloniality gives language to understanding how these logics continue to classify black women and women of color as non-human. The answer to Sojourner Truth's question: "Ain't I a woman?" remains the same. Black women and women of color continue to exist at the margins of humanness, often conceptualized as unworthy of protection. Coloniality defines black women and women of color's bodies as never genuinely belonging to them.

No Selves To Defend: A Legacy of Criminalizing Women of Color for Self-Defense is an anthology conceived and edited by Mariame Kaba. It is an educational tool published in June 2014. It addresses the legacies of black women and women of color who have invoked self-defense against violence and have been criminalized for it. The anthology is anchored in the story of Celia, a 19-year-old black woman kidnapped from her home at 14 and purchased by her captive, Robert Newsome. Celia endured five years of assault in Missouri, birthing two children.

After facing continuous assault, Celia sought support, asking Newsom's daughters to intervene and ask their father to stop assaulting her, but they refused. On the night of June 23, 1855, Newsom entered Celia's cabin with the intent of assaulting her, and she struck him with a stick, eventually killing him. Although there was legislation in Missouri that stated that women who are sexually violated are entitled to self-defense, ultimately, the jury found that

Celia was considered property, having no self to defend. Therefore Newsom had the right to rape her. Celia was found guilty and sentenced to death. *No Selves to Defend* outlines black women and women of color's difficulty accessing the right to self-defense. More importantly, it details how women of color's bodies have historically been considered property that can be claimed and controlled. I draw upon this example to analyze the legacies of legislation that work to uphold and perpetuate ideas of dehumanization and to illustrate how Lugones' theoretical framework is enacted through our legal system.

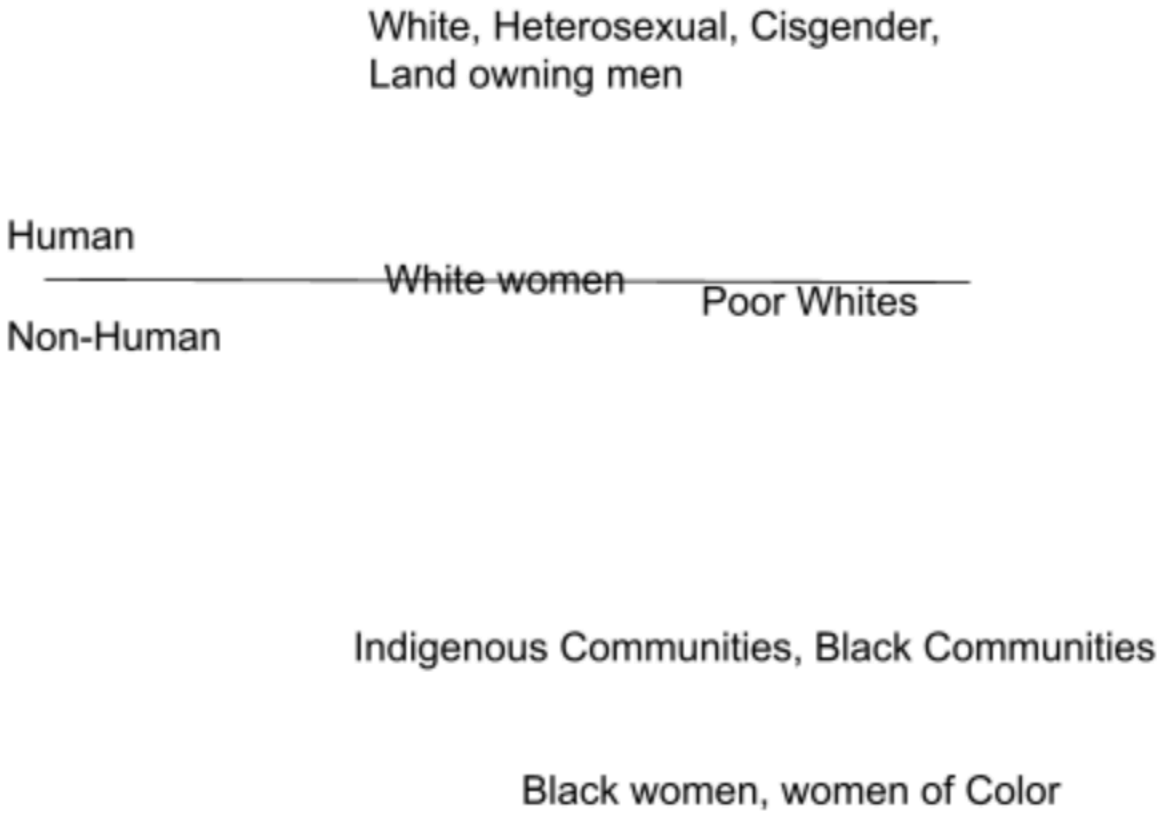

Figure 2.2 Diagram of Maria Lugones' Colonial Modern Gender System

A fundamental aspect of dehumanization is the exploitation of sexualities. I want to be very clear about how essential the control of reproductive and sexual labor is under the logic

of imperialism, capitalism, and Coloniality. Reproduction became a prerequisite for growing labor power. While white women's sexualities needed to be hyper-surveilled, black women and other colonized women's sexualities were put to work. Women of color had narratives created around their sexualities that aided in developing the exploitative system of capitalism. For black women, hyper-sexualization served to justify violent rapes and human chattel breeding practices. For colonized women, a similar process of hyper-sexualization began, but there is a crucial distinction I want to flesh out. Colonized women were *made* desirable, turned into a symbol, an homage, a metaphor for the ripe land and resources for which they were killed and raped. They symbolized conquering and masculine penetration, and while they were *desired,* they were never meant to be exploited in reproduction like black women. Rather, constructing their sexualities as excessive symbolized a desire to extract resources while removing their existence through genocide. They have been simultaneously desired and violently erased, their population always a surplus. This is a central contradiction defining how Indigenous and Latinx women are *desired*. The goal was to absorb them, and consume them, the way that the land and its resources could be. Their sexualities were crucial in symbolizing a ripeness of resources that merit dominance. However, this *desire* existed while simultaneously enacting genocidal violence. This narrative around colonized women remains. Indigenous women in the U.S. are increasingly disappearing with minimal resources to address their mass murders and disappearances. Latinx women's sexualities are a source of anxiety that insight fears of overpopulation and result in surveillance mechanisms such as forced sterilizations. While these narratives have been crucial to the development of economic systems, these narratives have also worked to marginalize these groups based on their gender and embodiment. I posit that there is an underdeveloped area of research and social theory that

inquires about how Indigenous and Latinx women are made disposable. This disposableness is historically linked to how processes of colonization positioned their sexualities, meaning that their sexualities were necessarily considered excessive. While painting their sexualities as excessive has benefitted how economic systems function, they simultaneously threaten heteropatriarchy and the structures of capitalism, which rely on absorbing and erasing all Indigenous ways of being and knowing.

For example, hyper-fertility is a far-reaching narrative associated with Latinx populations that position Latina women as dangerous to the State via their potential to overpopulate the planet. Numerous State-funded programs have worked to sterilize Latinas in Los Angeles, Puerto Rico forcibly, and at detention centers at the U.S.-Mexico border, to name a few. The contradiction here is that narratives of hyper-fertility were always already imposed as a process necessary for conquest. So, while we need to *desire* The Latina Body, we must also control and destroy her to protect her from herself. However, the confinement of what makes her eligible to be desired is also worth interrogation. The distinctive form of desire I am alluding to here depends on anti-black and anti-Indigenous ideas that completely categorize her as something different. As I have outlined in this section, there is value in making colonized women desirable, and that value is dependent on making her image distinguishable.

Creating The Latina Body: Creating Desire

The Latina Body is a highly contested site of inquiry, and defining The Latina Body is a daunting task for this project. I am interested in determining what function The Latina Body serves, how she exists in the cultural imagination, and why she lives this way. Carmen Miranda is the beginning of the answer to these questions. As Miranda has taught us, The Latina Body is a figment of a colonial imagination, the colonial residue which embodies a lustful desire for

domination, expansion, and extraction. And just as Miranda has exemplified, The Latina Body can be invoked even by white, non-Latinx subjectivities. I began this chapter with a series of questions we continue seeking answers to. What is Latinidad? What is The Latina Body? Latinidad is a fleeting idea that shifts, changes, and moves conveniently to fit any messy, sticky racial categorization process. But when we refer to The Latina Body, what are we locating?

To be Latinx is to live in ambiguous spaces between seemingly clean-cut categories such as black and white. Often, Latinidad is recruited into an embodiment that favors whiteness and disavowals any association with the "other," particularly with blackness and indigeneity. Latinidad has historically positioned whiteness as the fullest aspiration, which invites the positioning of whiteness as a strategy for upward mobility. This does not necessarily mean that Latinidad has no political potential for complexity; however, that complexity requires analysis and interrogations of anti-blackness and anti-Indigeneity. I enter conversations on Latinidad from the perspective of black and Indigenous Latin American thinkers, who engage Latinidad as a direct and violent process of erasure and blanqueamiento. Therefore, I view The Latina Body as a constructed ideological imposition that can constantly be negotiated, appropriated, and utilized in various contexts. The Latina Body is built through a history of sexualization. Sexual desire is a central component of understanding The Latina Body and Latinidad more broadly.

Sexual desire organizes how we interact as consumers, policymakers, and community members. As outlined above, coloniality is pivotal in how sexual and economic desires blend. Desire manages how capital moves. Although imperialist legacies are a prime example of this phenomenon, these histories are integrated into the evolution of our economic systems. For example, neoliberalism refers to economic and political policies introduced in response to a

profit decline. Neoliberalism references the late-20th-century reappearance of 19th-century approaches to free-market capitalism. In other words, neoliberalism presents an ideology of government intervention in business policies that are utilized to justify an open market. Because of neoliberal policies, countries in Latin America have opened to trade relationships that are extractive and ultimately make vulnerable everyday people in these countries. Neoliberalism is a visceral contemporary example of the impacts of U.S. capitalist interests that destabilize national economies, and its effects on U.S. workers are also vast and far-reaching. Yet, the public discourse around neoliberalism is overwhelmingly positive.

A long history of subordinating countries outside the U.S. in the Americas aids neoliberalism's public support. To preserve a dominant economic position on a global scale, there needs to be a reason or a justification to penetrate these countries. To see them as bountiful and desirable. Neoliberalism operates on desire. Desire has been theorized as a bodily or embodied process. Still, I am curious about what introducing desire in the economic context means because I argue that it works doubly here. Neoliberalism or neoliberal policies seek to restructure economic policy to ensure maximum profit. To do this, global markets are continuously sought after to find cheap, unorganized labor internationally. But how do you convince the masses, who are either losing their jobs in the U.S. context or being coerced into poverty wages in Latin American countries, to be okay with these policies and practices that leave U.S. workers jobless or forced into the service sector? Of course, an ideology of superiority, like Manifest Destiny, is responsible. The long-standing role of "protectors" of the Americas communicates an idea of national superiority; the U.S. has tasked itself with organizing the rest of the world, especially Latin American countries, and resources. But make no mistake, U.S. policies function on a desire for profit and expansion, and to achieve this feat,

an ideology of sexual desire is created. And that is where the convergence of economic desire and sexual desire is birthed.

Blackness is covertly desired while simultaneously erased in cultural production and international imaginaries of Latin American countries. Mireille Miller-Young's study on black women in pornography provides a foundational framework for understanding the "dissolving" nature of black women's contributions. "Brown Sugar" is a metaphor that connects black women's sexualities and sugar cane industries. Sexual economies in Brazil often rely on blackness to stimulate tourist attraction. At the same time, local governments push narratives of blanqueamiento or whitening their public image to the rest of the world (Carrier-Moisan, 2015). Arguably, through this understanding, the black Latina cannot exist. Any trace of phenotypical blackness is heavily surveilled and pushed out of the collective imagination of Latinidad. However, her sweetness is always present. In bachata, salsa, the recognizable afro beats in everyone's favorite reggaeton song. Her sweetness is what makes Latino America enticing and attractive. But her sweetness is instead packaged in a neat Carmen Miranda-styled inspiration. Where her sweetness can be indulged in and lusted after publicly through policy and media. The Latina Body requires authorization for who has access to embody it. Black Latinas occupy a specific racialized and sexualized context which I explore further in Chapter 2: "*Spicy Mami, Hot Tamale: Embodying Afro-Latinidad and Sex Worker Consciousness Through Cardi B."*

I draw upon decolonial theory and black feminist thought to explain social constructions of gender and womanhood specifically, as always already connected to political economy and the goals of imperialism and capitalism. I posit that for resources from Latin American countries to be acceptably yearned for, blackness and Indigeneity must be removed

from the construction of Latinidad. Latinidad is a complex identity marker that is often associated with geographical location. While scholars have also noted the contradictions in who "qualifies" as Latinx by interrogating shared histories of conquest and imperialism, it remains clear that Latinidad is not bounded by one correct category (Rodriguez 2003, 13-20). Instead, Latinidad is an identity marker loosely following ideas often constructed, circulated, and distributed amongst U.S. and Latin American media and marketing. However, marketing Latinidad is a homogenizing process that prioritizes and exports The Latina Body. Arlene Dávila's study on Latinos and marketing provides a foundational context for creating Latinidad as a homogenous market without distinction between class differences and national origin. Instead, from the perspective of marketing "Hispanic" executives and strategists—Latinidad is an idea to be sold rather than a complex identity category. Dávila's study of Latino marketing gives insight into the ethnic division of cultural production and labor where producers of media related to Latinidad are often removed from the U.S. Latinx experience and from a socio-economic position in Latin America that allows for a nuanced understanding of racial distinctions. The "first Hispanic marketing generation" was composed of Cuban immigrants after the Cuban Revolution, "Cuban executives who had previously been involved in advertising and marketing in Cuba" (Dávila 2001, 29).

Consequently, the first wave of representations of Latinidad introduced a complicated racial hierarchy that convoluted two racial systems that are not interchangeable, a U.S. one and a Latin American one. Therefore, while "…the Hispanic marketing industry, like any culture industry, does not simply manufacture cultural symbols and ideas," it also reflects "dominant hierarchies of representation and the greater political economy structures affecting the commodification of Hispanics in this country" (Dávila 2001, 24). Said differently, "Hispanic"

marketing exists in a dialectic between creating and forming identities, erasing them, and formulating an economic desire for Latinidad rooted in an insatiable hunger for imperialist expansion. Here I am moving toward analyzing stories or mythologies told of Latinidad. Since the turn of the nineteenth century, the U.S. has implemented comprehensive policies to ensure direct economic ties between the Americas. These mythologies are birthed through public policy and embodied through media and marketing. Narratives around marketing a people remain through a complicated understanding of who is considered Latinx in the public imaginary.

Complex and extensive histories of mestizaje, colonization, and legacies of enslavement blur our public imagination of Latinidad when we witness it in praxis. However, what does the ideological position of this collective imaginary of Latinidad suggest? When considering how The Latina Body is created, we must consider the mythologies accompanying the creation of identity categories. Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman give an insightful look into what it means to *tropicalize* or to assign meaning to a "particular space, geography, group, or nation with a set of traits, images, and values" (Aparicio & Chávez-Silverman 1997, 8). *Tropicalization* then considers a "mythic idea of Latinidad based on Anglo (or dominant) projections of fear. It is intricately connected to the history of political, economic, and ideological agendas of governments and of social institutions" (1997, 8). A mythic idea of Latinidad contributes to the commodification of culture and, I argue, a central commodification of sexualities.

While media and marketing are essential frameworks for understanding the creation of The Latina Body, I center the conversations between ideologies in media and public policies that have shaped the relationship between the U.S. and Latin America. Political economy

becomes an essential framework for interrogating how public policies interact and inform the formation of identities. Beginning with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the U.S. set the world stage by geographically naming North, Central, and South America as part of the New World—a world that European powers would not intervene. As many historians have noted, the significance here is the implicit ownership over Latin America that this policy inflicted. Subsequently, the Monroe Doctrine set the tone for the long-lasting and complicated relationship between the U.S. and the Caribbean and Latin America. It was followed by an amendment called The Big Brother Policy, which extended military protections from the U.S. into Latin America. This amendment allowed for physical penetration by U.S. military personnel and implicit ownership over land and resources. This imperialist logic, I argue, must be interrogated in connection to coloniality and the reading of power through the lens of desire.

The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities and Global Mediated Desire

Latinidad indexes various forms of *desire*. I want to complicate how we understand desire because *desire* is not always simply desiring something sexually. Yet, sexual desire is an ideological prerequisite for the *desire* that I want to distinguish here. The constructed desire for The Latina Body works to create imperialist lust for expansion. Colonization gives us an entry point into understanding how sexual and economic desires are conflated to birth multiple categories of desire, many of which are not sexual in nature. For example, desire is also invoked by desiring the "friendly" brown face that cuts your grass, that serves you Moët poolside at your favorite resort, that is made into a vulnerable worker through histories of migration. Global capitalism desires this cheap labor. From this vantage point, desire is a nuanced framework that operates on hierarchies of desire based on an introduction of myths of excessive sexualities. The Latina Body is a product of economic desire. A primary goal of this

project is to introduce a framework and analytic to help decipher questions about sexualities within Latina studies. I call this analytic The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities.

The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities operates on forms of desire. These constructed desires are based on two major categories, the first, a passion for economic expansion of capital, and the second, a constructed sexual desire for racialized sexualities. As it appears in the U.S., global capitalist economic growth is at least partially masked, or mascaraed, through a playful yearning for The Latina Body. I began this chapter with Carmen Miranda because she is a notable example of this phenomenon. Her iconography was used to solidify The Good Neighbor Policy. This policy positioned Latin American countries as ripe with natural resources. Miranda's embodiment of Latina aesthetics of excess was utilized by corporations such as La United Fruit Co., now known as Chiquita Banana, to penetrate Central American countries and dominate the banana industry, known then as banana republics.

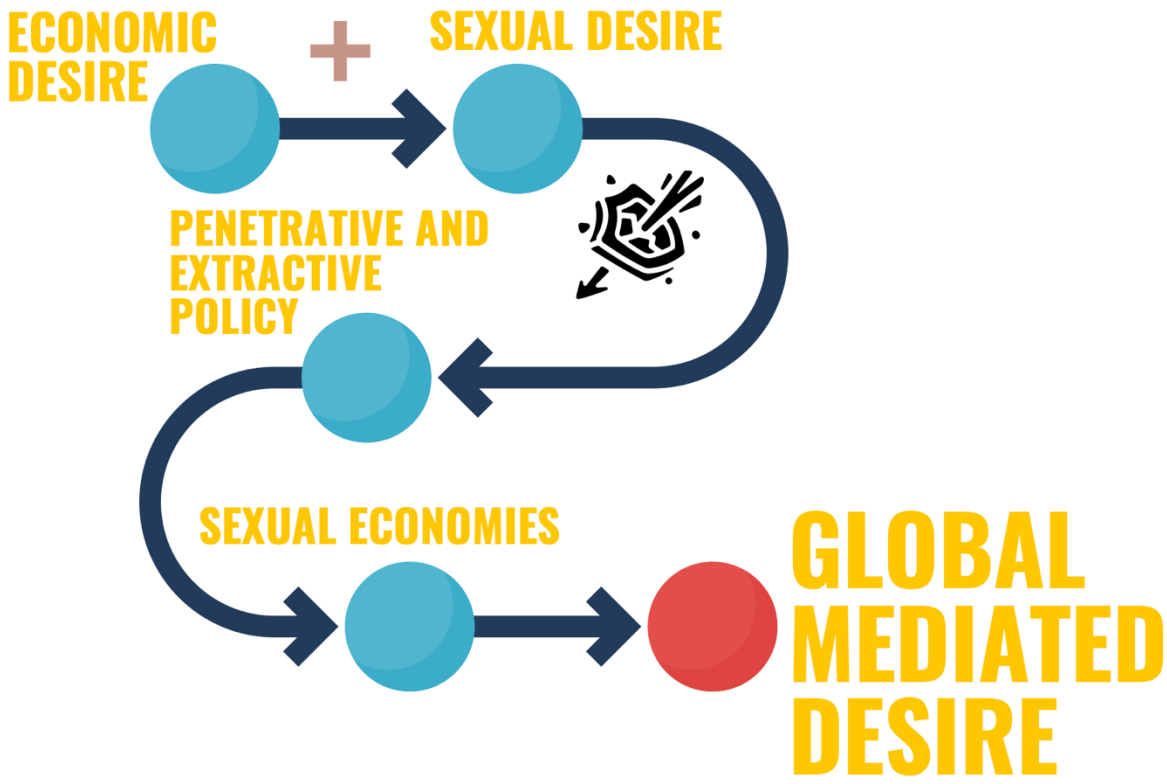

Figure 2.3—"Global Mediated Desire"

I employ *desire* as an essential theoretical framework in articulating a ravenous impulse for imperialist expansion that becomes synonymous with an insatiable desire for The Latina Body. *Desire* is a critical framework that exposes an always-intertwined correlation between imperialist growth, political economy, and sexual desire. I posit that to understand the legacies of imperialism and their impacts on global capitalism, we must understand their connections to sexualities and labor. Desire exists within a dialectic where desire organizes power, and power recruits desire. I am introducing "global mediated desire" as a dialectical framework to understand how sexualities, specifically sexual economies, are integrated with global capitalism and need each other to work. While *desire* as analytic names the imperialist desire for natural resources, global mediated desire explains how processes of hypersexualization are used to justify the expansion of capital and consequently create sexual economies. Global mediated desire makes explicit how desire works to destabilize economies while creating markets dependent on hypersexualization. The Latina Body is a theoretical category that explains how sexual desire is connected to imperialism and strategies for economic dominance.

The framework that I am building to understand Latina sexualities understands that racialized sexualities are created to aid in expanding empire. Sex work is the point of analysis that is fundamentally necessary to understand how Latina sexualities organize capital. Because Latina sexualities are constructed to signal sexual excess, they often work to stimulate economies because their sexualities are a commodity that has played a prominent role in building U.S. empire. However, the labor itself is discredited, scrutinized, and met with violence. I argue that sex work is the only framework to teach us about the relationships between Latina sexualities and political economy. Sex work illuminates the intricate nature of

sexual economies that position entire groups of people and continents as consumable, sexualized products. I engage sex work as an essential framework in studying Latina sexualities precisely because, like black women, Latina sexualities are entwined with legacies of imperialism and economical extraction and exploitation. “The Latina Body” is a product of the U.S.’s imperialist relationship with countries in Latin America (Enloe, 1990; Aparicio & Chavez-Silverman, 1997; Mendible, 2007).

Beginning in the 20th century, the U.S. manufactured a narrative through policy, media, and ideology that placed Latin America as a bountiful continent needing protection from foreign intervention. I identify The Latina Body as a carefully reproduced sign that signals excess and availability while eliciting sexual desire (Vargas, 2014; Rodriguez, 2014; Casillas et al., 2018). I employ *desire* as an essential theoretical framework in articulating an ongoing rapacious relationship between the U.S. and Latin America, whereby a deep desire for economic exploitation is masked by a deep yearning for The Latina Body. I connect this deep yearning for The Latina Body to imperialism because, as Carmen Miranda's cultural work teaches us, The Latina Body signals excessive sexuality as a metaphor for the excess of land and resources that are promised through imperialist expansion.

Desire here is a critical framework as it exposes an always convoluted correlation between imperialist expansion, political economy, and sexual desire. Latinidad is critically interrogated in this dissertation as a sought-after, consumable product that emphasizes morally acceptable desires while erasing blackness and Indigeneity. A key factor in constructing Latinidad is distinguishing between “desirable” myths and ones otherwise associated with what is deemed undesirable (blackness, Indigeneity, etc.). Coloniality unearths the ideological justifications utilized when constructing what we conceptualize and recognize as The Latina

Body. Sexualities are the embodied result of imperialist desire and, often, serve to uphold and extend imperialism and global markets based on these very logics of desire. I posit that when we engage sex work as a central aspect of our analyses, we understand how Latina sexualities are integrated with global economies.

A Sex Work Studies framework allows for an interrogation of consumption here not only in the ways we "consume" Latinidad via media and Latinx sexualities but also in how we "consume" Latinidad through the actual penetration and exploitative economic expansion into Latin American countries. This dual consumption is especially notable within a Sex Work Studies framework because sexual economies stabilize otherwise unstable Caribbean and Latin American economies (Cabezas, 2010; Shaeffer, 2015). Following Kimberley Hoang's 2015 study on global capitalism and the sex trade in Vietnam and Amalia Cabezas' 2009 study on sex and tourism in the Caribbean, I posit that to understand the legacies of imperialism and their impacts on racial formation, sexualities, labor, and opportunity for upward economic mobility, *desire* as analytic must be invoked.

Sex Work Studies and Latina Sexualities Studies

Sex work has remained a primarily contested and controversial labor category that needs analyses centered on gender and political economy. The Sex Wars of the 1980s illuminated an ongoing contentious engagement with pornography industries, women's liberation, and sex as an explicit transaction (Taormino et al., 2013). While anti-porn arguments emphasized exploitation, pro-porn intellectual engagement tended to overcompensate and frame sex work as a liberating practice. Both vantage points lacked nuance in connecting pornography industries to our conceptualizations of labor. Sex Work Studies expand our understanding of sexual labor by centering the "work" in sex work and

advancing conversations about sexual labor; instead, asking us to consider work itself as coercive (Weeks 2011; Miller-Young 2014; Berg 2021). As decolonial theory has taught us, gender and sexualities are integrated with forming economic systems and often depend on the marginalization of women of color and complete ownership over reproductive and sexual labor.

Marxist feminist thinkers have been critical of ideas of primitive accumulation in Marxist theory and have advocated for the centering of gendered labor in understanding the accumulation of wealth (Federici, Boris). In the simplest terms, primitive accumulation is the origin of capital by which individuals build their capital. Black Marxists like Cedric Robinson have emphasized how the sources of accumulation are deeply racialized. For example, the violent stealing and enslavement of people were the basis for how capital was built in the U.S. That form of primitive accumulation has shaped the formation of capitalism ever since. Yet primitive accumulation is often devoid of analysis of race and gender. Reproductive labor, and therefore sexual labor, is traditionally excluded from being recognized as primitive accumulation. That exclusion is noteworthy, and its analysis is essential. I seek to interrogate that exclusion better to understand the intersections between racialized sexualities and sex work. I argue that decolonial theory explains why this exclusion happens; reproductive labor is always already owned and is a prerequisite for the entire economic system to work seamlessly. Our understanding of sexual labor stems from a colonial introduction of gender dynamics that depend on the complete control of all feminized labor, including white women's sexual labor. Sex work as a labor category directly challenges the organization and division of labor introduced via colonization, creating tensions that always position sex workers as criminals.

My analysis here moves directly to apply a decolonial understanding of gender to our conceptualization of sex work. Sex workers face systemic, organized violence from State agencies that frame sex workers as victims of human trafficking while also positioning them as a group that cannot be protected. Workers are often criminalized when seeking support services from the State and are met with pimping charges when circulating safety tips amongst community members online (Bernstein; Juno & Mac; SWOP; BIPOC Collective; BSWC). Sex work as a labor category cannot exist within the gender logic of coloniality. Coloniality would define sex workers as thieves of labor power and resources and are therefore violently criminalized for it. Like the logic mentioned above of *No Selves to Defend*, women cannot own their sexual labor, and therefore their sexual labor cannot be protected. I want to note the intentionality of framing sex work as human trafficking because the State cannot conceptualize sex work as anything other than coercive and exploitative. After all, our economic systems depend on the ownership of feminized labor, such as sexual labor.

Sex Work and Coercion vs. Consent

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines Human Trafficking as an act involving "the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some labor or commercial sex act" (dhs.gov). By this definition, sex work is always understood as human trafficking because the prerequisite is that all labor requires full consent. However, as described above, when one does not own their sexual labor or their bodies, they can never give full consent because it isn't theirs to give. Antiwork politics illuminate the ideologies embedded in relationships individuals are expected to have to their work. Work ethic, for example, has been theorized as an essential idea that signals devotion, joy, and passion for one's work. This ideology works to motivate workers to continue production. To have a work ethic is to be a good subject who does not

challenge economic systems or labor production. However, sex workers have advocated for recognizing all work itself as coercive. Kathi Weeks' *The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* illuminates the deep ties between protestant ideologies and work politics to nuance the tensions between coercion and consent in work. Weeks put forth an understanding of the blending of coercion and choice that accounts for why individuals accept the work requirement to live. Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is a touchstone for studies of work ethic. Weber traces the Protestant work ethic to an irrational commitment to a "calling," which conflates life's purpose with work. If work is considered a "calling," then sex workers actively challenge this framework to situate the messy entanglement of desire, labor, and choice instead.

I turn back to Maria Lugones to converge ideologies of work with ideologies of sexual purity. While doctrines of work are necessary to ensure commitment from the labor force, ideologies of purity are required to assure that reproductive and sexual labor is not to be understood as work. While pornography industries and sexual economies continue to be caught in ideological debates of morality, sex workers are left to deal with the material consequences. For example, recently, subscription-based website, OnlyFans, a website popularized by content creators who use the platform to create customized and personalized sexual content for their "fans," announced a ban on pornography and any other related sexual content. This Terms of Service change would ultimately result in many workers being pushed off a site that had otherwise provided steady income during a global pandemic and allowed for the flexibility of halting in-person, full-service sex work (O'Brien, 2021). While this decision was immediately reversed thanks to the advocacy of sex workers, this announcement made viscerally clear the eerie dangers that sex worker communities constantly face, where they are often marginalized

and excluded from access to safe working conditions based on morality arguments. I analyze this website further in Chapter Three. As I piece together my understanding of work, I draw upon Coloniality to name the strategic forms of criminalization that are purposefully accompanied by ideologies of morality to justify violence against sex workers.

Sex workers navigate imposed hyper-criminalization because of their positions as owners of their sexual labor power. This directly threatens the world order. As Antonio Gramsci describes, while ideology creates hegemony, it is followed by a carceral arm that ensures that good subjects stay in line by making moral justifications. These carceral strategies work concurrently with laws to ensure the uninterrupted status quo. Sex work is a criminalized sector of labor. However, a decolonial lens helps me to understand how sex work is a direct threat to the State. In the following section, I aim to move past discussions of morality to understand instead the eerie insistence of the State to own sexual and feminized labor. I also aim to oppose anti-sex work camps in their one-dimensional analysis of sex work and analyze their stance as the ideological carceral arm that the State relies on to ensure that the gender order as we know it remains unthreatened.

Coloniality and FOSTA/SESTA

The Fighting Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) and Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) are bills introduced to make the Internet safer for all. Sex trafficking, and a particular fear for the safety of children, led the fight toward banning the solicitation of sex online. However, its implementation adversely affected sex workers and made tracking sex traffickers even more challenging (Blunt & Wolf 2020). Although these laws continuously gain popularity and support from anti-trafficking and religious groups, I aim to highlight the intentional criminalization of sex work by conflating work with sex trafficking. As I detailed

above, by definition, sex trafficking works to become conflated with sex work, a strategy that actively endangers workers.

While FOSTA/SESTA presents a tale of protection and harm reduction, sex workers actively reject these ideas and explain the direct harm these laws continue to cause. The signing of FOSTA in April of 2017 declared that websites could be held legally liable if their users post ads for prostitution. This meant that private companies currently owning cyberspace became legally liable for what was posted on their websites. This bill was responsible for the closure of websites used by sex workers to find work and to circulate safety strategies. For those who work in the sex trade, the invention of the Internet made for better working conditions, such as free advertisement space, client screening for safety, and easily accessible indoor work opportunities, rather than outdoor street walking (Bernstein 2007; McCombs; 2018). The Internet also expanded the sex trades and introduced what is now understood as digital sex work, URL sex work, or online sex work. Digital sex work, such as webcamming, allows for more flexibility for workers and the ability to avoid face-to-face interactions with potentially deadly outcomes with clients and the police (Jones, 2020). FOSTA/SESTA introduced surveillance mechanisms that have hindered access to already limited worker resources. For example, Visa and Mastercard recently announced that they would no longer do business with pornography websites to avoid the "enabling" of sex trafficking and child pornography. While criminalization and stigma continue to work against the well-being of sex workers actively, there continues to be a sophisticated morphing of power that presents itself as a solution rather than the true eerie nature of the damage.

Legalization is often cited as a helpful framework that allows for the freedom and safety of workers. Sex worker organizations, however, reject legalization as an adequate framework

to address violence against workers and instead push for decriminalization. Legalization frameworks fail to capture the inherent ownership over sexual labor monopolized by the State. Decriminalizing the sex trades is a radical position because it provides the basis to challenge the makeup of our economic systems. If sexual labor is always already owned by the State, then decriminalization inherently challenges this position by granting ownership of sexual labor to the individual. I argue that legalization is an extension of the existing gender order, and this carefully organized exception would allow the State to continue owning sexual labor. Therefore, it is not an emancipatory solution to a larger ideological question of safety and access to dignity. When we analyze sex work, decriminalization must be starting point by which we engage more enormous ideas of sexual labor because when we understand the logic that pushes criminalization onto those that sell sexual services, we understand more extensive processes of our economic systems that are based on the criminalization of marginalized groups such as sex workers.

Dehumanization works succinctly with criminalization to exert State control over labor production. When sex workers face violence from clients, such as rape, being robbed, or needing assistance with their working conditions, they cannot rely on police intervention. Police officers are vibrant symbols of violence for sex workers. As police abolitionists have noted, the U.S. policing system was created to create a network to protect and serve the ruling class and their assets. In *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights,* Juno Mac and Molly Smith outline the jarring statistics of gendered violence inflicted by police. They also analyze the historical connections between the genesis of the police force and the original patrol system tasked with chasing enslaved people who sought freedom (Juno & Mac, 2018, 15). Now, suppose we understand the police force as a network created to protect the ruling,

land-owning class (also utilized to ensure that people who were kidnapped and enslaved did not run away). In that case, it becomes clear that the police work similarly to ensure that those who want to sell sexual labor are heavily surveilled and disciplined. For sex workers and other marginalized and criminalized groups, there is a visceral understanding that the police are not a symbol of protection but are active agents of punishment and control.

I want to return to a decolonial analysis of gendered labor to understand how dehumanization and criminalization work together to ensure that sex workers are denied access to safe working conditions. As I have argued above, sex work as a labor category is not legible and is criminalized by the State because it is conceptualized as stealing resources. The police are responsible for ensuring that these resources (read sexual labor) are returned to the ruling class. Therefore, the police work equally to dehumanize workers, legitimizing their refusal to protect workers. This is exemplified by the unofficial acronym utilized by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), "No Humans Involved (N.I.H.)." N.I.H. describes the slaying of sex workers, drug users, and other criminalized groups. The "No Humans Involved" classification is an ideological position that situates particular groups of people as a liability to the social order.

Sex workers have written at length about the harms of policing, borders, and the carceral system and shed light on the interconnections between criminalizing sexual labor and broader marginalization processes from the State. Sex Workers Outreach Project-USA (SWOPUSA) is a national social justice network dedicated to the fundamental human rights of people involved in the sex trades and their communities, focusing on ending violence and stigma through education and advocacy. SWOPUSA.org published a statement on their website during the week of December 17, 2021, highlighting how solidarity is integral in sex

worker organizing, stating, “The majority of violence against sex workers is not just violence against sex work--it’s also violence against transwomen, against women of color, against drug uses, against immigrant. We cannot end the marginalization and victimization of all sex workers without also fighting trans-phobia, racism, stigma and criminalization of drug use, and xenophobia". A sex worker politic approaches solidarity with the understanding of the integrated nature of oppression, continuing, " Racism, economic inequality, systems of colonialist and state violence and oppression must end” (SWOPUSA.org). A sex worker consciousness and analytic is a sophisticated understanding of how power works to exert control under the guise of morality and “protection.” Similarly, “decolonial queerness/sexualities as a set of analytics and practices is only transformative if it includes a critique of all relations of power" (Bacchetta et al.; 2020). I posit that a decolonial approach to engaging with the political work of sex work brings us closer to an emancipatory framework and an accurate reading of the dominant order.

Racialized Sexualities and Sex Work

Racialized sexualities are a vital part of the histories of women of color’s aesthetics, politics, and understandings of labor and sexualities. I define Racialized sexualities as a set of gendered embodied practices associated with marginalized genders that are racialized and classed. These sexualities directly respond to State-sanctioned and epistemic violence and tend to signal difference and a sense of pride in that difference. Feminists have theorized the role of self-fashioning and self-adornment for women of color who interface with power and learn to negotiate their identities through aesthetic practices (Hernandez, 2020; Hurtado & Cantú, 2020). For example, Pachuca's self-fashioning practices are a popularized genre of racialized sexualities whereby these women found pleasure and meaning in response to a historical

moment when Mexican American youths were isolated and criminalized for their existence. Pachucas were outlawed for their excessive and deviant sexualities, serving as a cautionary tale for otherwise respectable women (Ramirez, 2009). Chola aesthetics, an urban manifestation of criminalized embodiment, refuses to follow the so-called appropriate ideals of womanhood (read White). When non-white excessive femininity knowingly indexes danger and disruption, the choice of self-fashioning in these ways takes on a new meaning. Jillian Hernandez writes about *la chonga*, a working-class embodiment of excessive racialized sexualities, a politically subversive form of embodied knowledge. *La chonga* embodies "Sexual-Aesthetic Excess," understood as hyper-sexual, wearing tight clothing and excessive make-up. Her image indexes sexualities that create disgust and anxiety, although they may be desired covertly. *La chonga* exemplifies the political potential in aesthetic practices and the tensions they uncover when confronting ideas of so-called respectable femininities.

Similar to Hernandez's concept of Sexual-Aesthetic Excess, racialized sexualities directly respond to imposed racial narratives. While these femininities are embodied through phenotypic categorizations such as skin color, body type, and markers such as large breasts and hips--subversive self-fashioning practices such as excessive jewelry, tight clothing, excessive make-up, and long acrylic nails signal a personal connection to racialized sexualities; a sense of pride in recognizing the anxiety and disruption that your body causes. These self-fashioning practices are politically subversive in nature--embodying excessiveness in sexuality as a direct response to long-time harmful ideas of hyper-fertility and sexual excess that stem from narratives introduced via colonization. To choose to display hyper-sexuality, to alienate oneself, speaks to power in these aesthetic practices; to find pleasure, power, and everything in between, is an act of radical self-love and an emancipatory framework. After all, the very

excessive nature of these sexualities poses a threat to the economic formation of gender relations. Deborah R. Vargas theorizes *suciedad* as a queer analytic, stating,

> ….the analytic of lo sucio operates in conversation with three racialized discourses of difference, with attention to queer genders and sexualities: first, lewd, obscene, offensive hypersexual undisciplined bodies; second darkened suspect citizens perpetually untrustworthy, impure, and nonloyal to the state; and third, diseased "cultures of poverty" subjects overdetermined to fail to arrive to normative womanhood and manhood (716).

Like Sexual-Aesthetic Excess, racialized sexualities are expected to conjure disgust and shame because these practices explicitly index blackness and non-normative sexualities. To be a *sucia* is to not only be a waste of neoliberal time and resources but to reject altogether the logic by which you are categorized. Sucias understand their subjectivity as conditionally desirable and embody that desire with great pleasure, although this position is precarious. Similarly, I argue that sex workers occupy a consciousness that recognizes the danger in taking ownership of sexual labor and finding ways to flirt with, fuck, and taunt the power structures that wish to see them dead.

I associate racialized sexualities with sex work because racialized sexualities signal sexual excess and bear a connection to more significant economic global processes of accumulation. Global capitalism and imperialism rely on the creation of racialized sexualities and the creation of sex markets based on those racialized sexualities. Sex work is the selling or trading of sexualities for money or goods and is an industry that works to enhance economies globally. As noted above, sex workers are criminalized for participating in this industry. Yet, they viscerally understand the connections between sexualities, global economies, and State-sanctioned violence against marginalized genders and sexual labor. Sex workers have spearheaded the vital work of analyzing the role of the State in violence against all feminized

labor because they are on the front lines against this violence. Sex work and racialized femininities are politically subversive in nature because they not only work to highlight gender violence but also actively disrupt the logics that organizes them.

Latina Sex Worker Cyborg Learning to Flirt with, to Fuck, and to Taunt

I want to explore the idea of The Latina Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness as an emancipatory and illuminating consciousness that bridges together a detailed understanding of how racialized marginalization works directly with the marginalization of sexual labor. Cyborg Consciousness reaches toward liberation and locates racialized sexualities as a methodology and lens for disidentifying, or as Mireille Miller-Young suggests, an opportunity to put "hypersexuality to work" (Muñoz; 1999, Miller-Young; 2015). I am offering a framework that articulates the flirtatious nature of Latina sex workers, who utilize their racialized positions to address surveillance and anxieties about their bodies. In *Methodologies of the Oppressed,* Chela Sandoval outlines the sophisticated methodologies women of color call upon to navigate power. Sandoval's reading of Donna Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs" details Haraway's terms to describe a "revolutionary form of human being, a creature who lives in both 'social reality' and 'fiction...'" with the ability to live at the margins, challenging binary oppositions (Sandoval; 2000; 167). Like Gloria Anzaldúa's *mestiza consciousness*, a consciousness that eradicates binaries and cites the geographical location of the U.S.-Mexico border to articulate a complicated lived reality of how imposed borders of identity serve to sever ties within a whole self. It is the existence here, both in social reality and in fiction, that I seek to theorize through. As detailed above, The Latina Body is a constructed and reproduced body. Created to elicit desire braided into imperialism and expansion, this technological merging highlights a hyper-awareness of gender, an awareness that Latinidad is an embodied colonial fantasy and a

manufactured capitalist entity. However, I posit that the possibilities of playfully representing Latinidad, with an understanding of its complicated colonial histories, bring forth a playful and hopeful connection to the self through sex work. This playful and optimistic position aids in facing the dehumanizing conditions of poverty and work culture.

Altogether, the myth of The Latina Body serves as a model for what we fear most. She is racially ambiguous, another form of stating she is palatable to desires for whiteness. Her mythology is removed from blackness, making her an acceptable partner. Her body is tied to narratives of marvel and spectacle; she is the Other, the division introduced through colonization, control, and domination. However, her ability to read power structures and how they intersect to marginalize her existence as a racialized woman, a sex worker, is worthy of inquiry. This Cyborg Consciousness is organized around continued survival but moves into a flirtatious form of coexistence with those who wish her death. To reach this level of consciousness is to reach a level of emancipation by understanding the fiction interwoven into her breasts, hips, and entire being, which she has been taught to fear, to dispose of. This revolutionary technology, a state of consciousness, gives language to an already existing form of survival and pleasure for many marginalized groups. This dissertation is rooted in naming a skill, a technology, invoked by marginalized genders who avoid those who hunt them, who wish harm on them knowingly or unknowingly. Latina sex workers live at the margins of racial, gender, and sexual oppression and learn to flirt with imposed ideas of femininity.

On the one hand, Latinas are tasked with carrying histories of imperialist policies that work to create a market based on desiring their sexual labor; on the other, that same sexual labor is criminalized and should not be accessed. Latina sex workers begin navigating multiple realities and learn to create new categories of being rooted in a critical awareness of sexual

labor. By weaving together an understanding of the history of gendered labor, sex work, and racialized aesthetics, I argue in the following section that Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness works from a critical understanding of all these histories simultaneously.

Latina Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness

I refer to "Cyborg" here to extend Chela Sandoval's Oppositional Cyber-Consciousness because of its intellectual history in making sense of how women of color navigate power while often being Otherized. The Cyborg is a "monstrous" image, the "'illegitimate' child of human and machine, science, and technology, dominant society, and oppositional social movement, male and female, 'first' and 'third' worlds--indeed of every binary" (Sandoval; 2000; 167). She is a horror, a treacherous woman who dares to recognize fiction in all her realities. At the beginning of this chapter, I outlined various histories of Latinidad, sex work, and U.S. extractive trade relations with Latin American countries. The radical potential of Latina sex workers is in their navigation of how they are hypersexualized to create markets and then flirt with those same markets to make a living. A Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness plays with artificiality through the embodiments of sexuality and *desire*. Latinas participating in sexual economies are critical examples of how Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness manifests.

There are five fictitious realities the Latina Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness learns to navigate. This consciousness works to assemble and reassemble realities and recognizes the fiction in each. The first, *Coloniality Says I Am a Whore*; I begin by bringing this analysis back to The Colonial Modern Gender System. Latinas navigate the processes by which they are racialized. Latinas are categorized as hyper-fertile and hypersexual. Their bodies signal availability and global mediated desire. However, while their bodies are positioned as

desirable, they are simultaneously criminalized and viewed as a threat to the U.S. nation-state via potential overpopulation; their sexual excess is placed against them. So, while desired, feared, and loathed at once, they learn to invoke these legacies when necessary and pleasurable. This first reclamation step, like oppositional consciousness or disidentification, signals toward agential potentialities where instead of fearing or mistrusting their sexualities, they might learn to yield them to their advantage. This structural "fucking back" speaks directly to how Latina sexualities have been constructed as hyper-sexual to aid in the penetration of Latin American countries. To "fuck back" is to reject the imposed fear and disgust of their sexualities and recognize the pleasure and power extracted from them.

Second, *Religion Says I Am a Virgin--Not A Whore;* Historically, religion has played a complicated and crucial role in cultural production. Catholicism, for example, is a crux of hope for migrant communities. La Virgen de Guadalupe is a notable example of the robust dedication from working-class Latinx families in the U.S. La Virgen symbolizes the virginal being that creates and sustains life. She is the divine embodiment of proper womanhood, and her asexual identity is cited as an educational tool for Latinas navigating a world of dehumanization. However, many Chicana feminists have reclaimed La Virgen de Guadalupe as a symbol of defiance and have complicated how feminists relate to religion.

Latina Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness disrupts how religion defines so-called proper sexualities. Because the virgin-whore dichotomy ultimately works to discipline young girls into sexual purity, a refusal to accept these conditions set forth by religion speaks to a more robust understanding of how Latina sex workers interact with power. For example, excessive sexualities are associated with the non-human. Willingly embodying and leaning into excess signals defiance of the dichotomous characterization of human and non-human.

When a Latina chooses to represent sexual excess, her refusal to reject the parts of her associated with blackness becomes problematic. Religion becomes essential in understanding how this is accomplished; purity is associated with whiteness. Therefore, if a Latina wishes to be palatable, she must remove sexual excess from her body. When she does the opposite, she challenges structures of power that say that if she wants to be human, she must remove any excess signals from her body.

Third, *Sex Work is Stealing from the State (According to Coloniality;)* As outlined above, sex work is a highly criminalized category of work. For many, sex work is the lowest form of work that could ever be imagined, so much so that consent can hardly be envisioned. However, sex workers have a visceral understanding of poverty and unjust working conditions, and their participation in this form of labor creates a rupture in how work is conceptualized. By participating in a hyper-criminalized labor category, sex workers unearth the root of coercion in all forms of work. Why do we accept the dehumanizing conditions of the 21st century? When our jobs do not pay us enough to live? When our boundaries of work and home are constantly crossed? This uncomfortable realization is at the core of Latina Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness. The injustices of work and what we are forced to do for money are never interrogated until the question of sex is introduced. The most significant transgression of sex workers is their unveiling of the brutal nature of society where poverty is normalized. The Cyborg reflects injustice and the ugliest parts of society to us.

Four, *The Police Want to Kill Me for Being a Whore;* because Latina sex workers are working against the logic of Coloniality, they are hunted by the State and learn to navigate State violence being inflicted. Dehumanization and criminalization are far-reaching in sex

worker communities, and State-sanctioned violence extends beyond criminality into other forms of social isolation.

Five, *My Body Creates Global Markets;* The fifth fictitious reality strings together their entire existence, that is, the understanding that their racialized, sexualized identities stabilize the economic system and create specific sexual markets. When they put their sexualities to work to address manufactured poverty, they speak back to power on ideological and material levels.

What Does the Cyborg Teach Us?

Latina sex workers learn to navigate the social order that interconnects their racialized subjectivities with their sexualized subjectivities to illuminate the global processes of imperialism and economic expansion that we witness throughout Latin American countries. Racialized sexual economies are necessary for the successful penetration of Latin American countries. To situate this argument, I analyze U.S. transnational trade agreements that position Latin American countries as desirable. Sexual economies provide fundamental insight into understanding how U.S. imperialism creates markets of desire that ultimately work to stabilize national economies that have otherwise been destabilized by globalization and imperialist projects. I merge Sex Work Studies with Latin American Studies because this requires us to address the role of sex and desire in how the U.S. navigates and justifies invasive policy.

The impact of this project and the contributions it makes to our understanding of sex work as a criminalized category of labor teaches us broader questions of coloniality and what decolonial sexualities have the potential to address. The digital sex workers and cultural workers in this dissertation give voice to an emancipatory framework of liberation and critique of labor. In the following chapters, I expand on the impacts of these five fictitious realities and

how they matrix together to create complicated global relations for Latinas. Latina sex workers teach us fundamental aspects of imperialism, globalization, and the interconnections of the sex trade.

Chapter Two:

Spicy Mami, Hot Tamale:

Embodying Black Latinidad and Reimagining Respectability Through Cardi B's Sex Worker Discourse

And yes, I exposed my titties before. Yes, I showed my ass before for some motherfucking money because a bitch like me with no college degree in New York City can't get no job that's gonna pay her more than 260 a week. That's why you little bitches gotta stay in school. Cuz shit gets real.
Cardi B Instagram Upload, 2015

Ever since I started using guys, I feel so much better about myself. I feel so much more powerful.
Cardi B Love & Hip Hop: New York, 2016

I don't do nothing for free. You know I gotta charge.
Cardi B "On Fleek," 2016

They call me Cardi Bardi Banging Body Spicy Mami Hot Tamale.
Cardi B "I like it," 2018

The Bronx-born, Dominican, and Trinidadian-raised superstar and sex worker icon Belcaliz Almanzar, popularly known as Cardi B, began her contributions as a cultural worker through her presence on social media. From 2015 to 2017, Cardi B became a social media figure and became famous because of her videos on Instagram in strip club locker rooms. She playfully detailed the life of a young stripper in New York City with a behind-the-scenes experience detailing the lives of working-class women of color. She became famous because of her charming and outlandish personality. Cardi B captivated the world and became a critical component of public discourse. Her videos and overall presence in popular culture questioned the logic of racialized sexualities and labor.

Cardi is a cultural icon whose ascension to fame unearthed an extensive political consciousness stemming from sex workers' unique relationship to State violence and dehumanization. Cardi illuminates tensions between black women and women of color's

bodies and how global capitalism categorizes their bodies as already owned by the State. She represents the everyday struggles of women of color who navigate poverty and economic injustices in the U.S. In this chapter, I theorize her presence on Instagram as one that incited violent responses from men and women alike. For example, the *VH1* 2016 *Love & Hip Hop: New York* end-of-season reunion special culminated in Cardi B's presence in popular culture's social sphere. At this moment, she had officially arrived and embodied the long-time cultural resistance stemming from sex worker consciousness, black women, and many cultural workers who actively challenge ideas of respectability (Bernstein, 2007; Miller-Young, 2015; Mac & Smith, 2018). I do not wish to imply Cardi is the first to invoke sex worker consciousness into public discourse. However, I name Cardi as a concrete case study in understanding how her identities as a black Latina sex worker matrix together to credit the contributions of sex workers directly. Cardi is a foundational analysis point when studying women's economic justice on the world stage. This chapter explores Cardi B's explicit representation of sex worker discourse.

Witnessing as Method: Witnessing Cardi, Witnessing Sex Worker Politic and Discourse

I remember the first time I stumbled across Cardi B's social media page on Instagram in early 2016. In my first year of graduate school, I had recently moved further away from my family. I was navigating feelings of anxiety, graduate student exploitation, and a desire to live independently despite my feelings of isolation. As I scrolled through my timeline on Instagram, I came across a profile run by an infectiously charismatic content creator who posted videos about the struggles of a stripper in New York City. Often posting raw videos of herself with no makeup on, in last night's makeup, and strip club locker rooms, Cardi soon became an inspirational influencer to me. And despite the opinions of many scholars at the time, I

understood Cardi's embodiment and politics as an important site of inquiry. Cardi embodied the struggles of working-class women that were not readily available to me in feminist analyzes of gender. More importantly, though, Cardi displayed a specific experience of racialized sexualities reflected in the sex trade that immediately struck me as significant and worthy of study. The more I engaged with Cardi's content, the more I realized the significance of her cultural contributions to our understanding of sex work and racialized sexualities. I shifted from not just an eager fan but to someone witnessing Cardi face structural violence and how she navigated the world as a black Latina sex worker, often rupturing our understandings of respectable femininity.

As a graduate student in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I took several graduate seminars with feminist philosopher Chela Sandoval and have experienced substantial intellectual growth alongside her. She now chairs my dissertation committee. I was employed as a teaching assistant for her transformative course titled 'Decolonizing Feminisms.' and was taught firsthand the Spoken Wor(l)d Art Performance Activism (SWAPA) method. SWAPA is a type of writing or performance that reflects an embodied knowledge that "functions as personal testimony, poetry, and history-making." (Alvarez, 216). Sandoval begins the course by explaining the method of close reading and describing the living relationship required for students to engage with the assigned theory. She refers to the course reader as the student's toolbox, comparing it to her father's toolbox as a machinist–filled with possibilities for creating new worlds. In his 2014 article "Jotería Pedagogy, SWAPA, and Saldovalian Approaches to Liberation," Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr. notes that 'Decolonizing Feminisms' surveys U.S. Third World Feminist thought. Sandoval integrates teachings of close reading to dissect the theories of U.S. Third

World Feminist thinkers. To bear witness, decode the social realities we orbit, and create new realities together. "SWAPA is a method of understanding not only texts but also ourselves and the social world around us. It teaches us all to be semioticians–sign readers–or, rather, it teaches us that we are all semioticians. SWAPA and witnessing are ways of 'reading' that function as strategies for decolonization and emancipation." (Alvarez, 218). An essential component of SWAPA as a method for knowledge production is "witnessing." To "witness" is to listen to understand and give the author back what you understood. SWAPAs are performed through a ceremony where students are asked to prepare their SWAPA by engaging with course materials. They are asked to have a deep and personal connection with their assigned readings, finding a quote that resonates with them. Once students find a quote that enlivens their senses and what Chela Sandoval calls their mindbodyemotion matrix, they prepare a written response that will be edited and performed for the class. This ceremony teaches students to be active witnesses.

To be an active witness is to be analytical but in a way that undoes the separation of mind, body, emotion, and spirit. Witnessing requires the decolonization of our relationship to our feelings. Sandoval argues that our emotions guide our understanding of the world and how we fit into it. To be an active witness is to understand what is happening around you, constantly contextualizing through the mindbodyemotion matrix. To be an active witness is to understand, be able to see, and read signs of imposed ideas of reality and social hierarchies. When you partake in active witnessing, you open yourself to the possibility of worldbuilding, to see and understand how you and others interact with imposed cultural logic that gives way to creating new worlds. Active witnesses have a responsibility to themselves and each other. They are responsible for listening, understanding, and giving back what they understand about how our

bodies are perceived in the world. This process creates new insights and knowledge and allows for co-creating different worlds. Just as we have a responsibility to each other to be good active witnesses during SWAPA ceremonies, I invoke this method in my analysis of Cardi because I am giving back to sex worker communities my understanding of their cultural contributions. Cardi offers a framework to analyze how racialized sexualities often exist at a point of tension with global capitalism. By witnessing Cardi B's contributions, I am penning an academic love letter to her cultural impact, detailing the epistemic violence she has faced and theorizing from the joy and excitement she has created.

Testimonio

The Latin American tradition of testimonio shares a component of witnessing; it is a "hybridized genre" that reflects a black tradition of testifying and a Latin American method of sharing lived experiences, experiences witnessed by communities undergoing similar oppressive conditions (Rodriguez, 2016). For activists in Latin American countries, testimonio is a public act often in town squares; mothers confronting governments who turn a blind eye to the disappearance of their children, testifying for everyone to see and to witness. Witnessing in this context is a collaborative practice that prioritizes government accountability, but witnessing is also a necessary tool for survival. To be witnessed is to share an understanding of structural conditions that have rendered you both vulnerable and to rely on collective knowledge to give language to these vulnerabilities.

Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios is an anthology spelling out experiences of Latinas in academia. It is an example of a collective process of both testimonio on the part of the authors and witnessing on the part of the reader, witnessing epistemic violence inflicted on marginalized women in the academy. It is a collection of anonymous and publicly authored

essays that work to collectively speak back to power and illuminate systemic injustice for women of color in higher education. Witnessing as an analytic in this context provides a deeper understanding of injustice and the quotidian ways women of color experience resistance and liberation. As noted above in Sandoval's SWAPA method, witnessing as an analytic requires embodied knowledge, and requires an ability to read signs to change the world.

Through my SWAPA training, I approach my analyses of Cardi B. I employ witnessing as an analytic to excavate the meanings she brings forth for a sex worker politic and understanding of sex worker discourse. As the legacy of witnessing suggests, I am responsible for adequately witnessing the sex worker communities she represents. I theorize Cardi's lived experiences, interviews, and music as an articulation of a sex worker politic or a sex worker discourse and bear witness to her in this way. I define a sex worker politic as embodied knowledge reflecting the marginalization of people in the sex trade. In chapter one, I argued that sex work as a labor category directly challenges the organization and division of labor introduced via colonization, creating a tension that always positions sex workers as criminals. To have a sex worker politic then refers to a visceral understanding of the criminalization and stigma of sex workers and actively challenges it. A sex worker politic questions our understanding of how sexual labor is categorized in society and works to destabilize these cultural logics around sex and create new ones. I note here, however, that just as the criminalization of sex workers positions them as targets for violence, Cardi is an example of how sex workers are targeted for their affiliation with the sex trade.

Introducing Underground Hood Feminist Icon—Cardi B

Belcalis Almanzar, widely known as Cardi B, began her digital cultural imprint as an underground hood feminist icon from the Bronx, New York. Her working-class background as

a Dominican-Trinidadian Black Latina informs her racially ambiguous and hyper-surveilled existence and her identity as a former sex worker. I theorize that her existence is illegible to the state and therefore threatening it because of her inherent challenge to binary oppositions surrounding identity (Anzaldúa, 1980). Borderland and U.S. Third World feminist theories build frameworks to articulate an ongoing tension between imposed identity categorization and lived experiences that contradict these impositions. Black Latina feminisms further interrogate the sticky realities of multiple identities. Black Latinas have documented their highly contested position within black and Latinx communities (Zahira Kelly, La Gata). Black Latina women are at the forefront of theorizing and working through the anti-black discourses that exist globally and within the western hemisphere. AfroLatina theorist Omaris Z. Zamora cites Agustín Lao-Montes to argue that "AfroLatinas '...transgress essentialist conceptions of self, memory, culture, and politics corresponding to all-encompassing categories of identity and community such as simply 'Blacks' and 'Latinos.'" Zamora argues for a framework that challenges our thinking of the relationship between Blackness to national belonging and theorizes "AfroLatina experience and identity as a fluid body that transgresses various spaces at a time." Zamora defines "trance" as an Afro-diasporic framework that references an altered consciousness that allows for new modes of thinking and being. Like Zamora's understanding of Black Latinas transcending borders of identification, I assert that Cardi B's entrance into the mainstream magnified the tensions between sex workers and civilians and Blackness within Latinidad. Her body and her embodied performance of a working-class black Latina from the Bronx provide the theoretical foreground for inquiry and discussion surrounding sexuality, excess, black Latinidad, agency, and labor. As I argued in chapter one of this dissertation, sex workers exist in a similar third space where their existence is hyper-surveilled and

delegitimized. I assert that Cardi B pushes the boundaries of power because of her identity as a former sex worker and a black Latina. She enters the mainstream and strategically positions herself in the third space through sex worker discourse.

Known for her outspoken and confrontational digital presence, Cardi B rose to fame on Instagram in 2015. With her popularized single "Bodak Yellow," Cardi B transcended Instagram imaginaries. She was recognized as the second female solo rapper to hit number one on the Billboard hot 100 since Lauryn Hill in 1998. Cardi B's success has ultimately led her to multiple partnerships with affluent designers and endorsement deals with Pepsi and Reebok, among other major corporations. Cardi's engagement with neoliberal practices and wealth makes her susceptible to valid critiques. However, in this chapter, I understand her political significance as a complicated relationship between neoliberal tactics and revolutionary possibilities (Jose Esteban-Munoz, 1999; Sandoval, 2001; Miller-Young, 2014). I do not wish to analyze Cardi through a binary lens where I am asserting her as an empowering figure; instead, I seek to answer questions surrounding her identities and how she might be a case study for how racialized sexualities are put to work, particularly within the context of Blackness and Latinidad. The contradictory nature of Cardi B's cultural work must be further investigated. I posit that her relationship with sex industries positions her as a vital example of the intersections between sex work, feminized labor, and economic justice issues for women of color. Cardi B's identity as a sex worker icon makes her an important and mandatory exploration site when discussing Latinx and black sexualities.

From the age of eight years old, Cardi B and her family lived in the Bronx, New York. In an hour-long interview with VladTV, she notes that both parents had "poor jobs" or working-class jobs that influenced her upbringing. In this interview, she consciously alludes

to the socioeconomic position of her and her family. She reflects on how her socioeconomic status influenced her decision to begin stripping (also called dancing). She comments on the violence she was exposed to and directly connects violence, such as crime rates and theft, to the lack of resources allocated for working-class, poor communities like the Bronx.

For Cardi, financial independence also meant escaping abuse. In this same interview, Cardi explains that her mother kicked her out of her house, and she moved in with her boyfriend at the time. She shares in this interview with VladTV that she felt stuck because she did not have money to support herself. She shared that her job at a grocery store paid her 200 dollars a week, and she struggled to eat and survive in her home city. She was fired from her job at the grocery store and decided to start stripping. She started at what she calls a "white strip club," where the women around her were Russian, light complexion women. She reflects on how the strip club challenged how she viewed her body, and ultimately, she decided to get cosmetic procedures done to enhance her breast and buttocks size. The sex trade influenced Cardi to understand that her appearance correlated with earning potential. She then moved from a "white club" to an "urban" or "hood club." When she was at this club, she realized she wasn't making as much money as the other women because of her smaller body size. This led to her decision to enhance her buttocks size through a procedure called buttock injections for augmentation, a technique that is extremely dangerous and has resulted in many fatalities. This high-risk procedure led to Cardi making significantly more money and using Instagram as a venue to share life advice about stripping, how to make money, and how to manipulate men through sexuality. Her consistent popularity captivated a large following, and her success on Instagram led to her being cast in the sixth season of *Love & Hip Hop: New York.* She strategically utilizes her body and sexuality to gain financial autonomy. She never claims to

exist outside of patriarchy; instead, she notes how she "plays the game" and uses men and patriarchy to her advantage.

Cardi B documented her life on Instagram as a dancer in New York City, gaining a large following and recognition throughout the Internet. Her popularity and reputation for being confrontational and elevating transgressive ideas about sexual labor soon made her a target for online harassment and critique. Her existence and persistence in vocalizing sex worker discourse online created a larger combative discourse surrounding appropriate performances of femininity and sexual labor. I am especially interested in Cardi's Instagram presence between 2014 and 2016 because she articulates what I understand as a sex worker discourse. While women are constantly policed into appropriate embodiments of femininity by name-calling tactics, Cardi followed a transgressive and playful stance, asserting herself as a "stripper ho." Her stance as a "ho" signals a break in shame associated with members of sex industries and confronts stigmas ascribed to women. The "ho" is "a slur that has become synonymous with black working-class sexual nonconformist womanhood since the early 1990s" (Miller-Young, 144, 2014). Black feminists have trailblazed understandings of sex and race-related excess, while most Chicana/Latina feminisms have avoided it. Chicana lesbian theorists have pushed Chicana/Latina feminism to integrate excess, sex, and pleasure into knowledge production. This dissertation follows lesbian Chicana feminists and black feminists and is the first to argue against an impetus to remove sex work from analyses of Latina sexualities. Such removals might be informed by a need to conform to respectability politics. However, I argue that erasing sex work from scholarly studies would sanitize sexualities rather than welcoming "lo sucio," a vernacular for dirty or grimy. "Suciedad" recognizes that while brownness is equated with "dirty" sexualities, being a "sucia," a dirty woman signals a

complicated and sticky relationship to power (Vargas 2014). This chapter interrogates Cardi's vocalization of a sex worker discourse and welcomes the messy, sticky, and raunchy realness that she offers.

Gestures: Flirting, Fucking, and Taunting

Sex worker consciousness stems from the specific experience of selling sex. However, I argue that these ideas found in sex industries exist beyond these economies and often these economies influence popular culture and interpersonal relationships outside of sexual economies. Everyday interactions can disrupt power dynamics and reclaim a sense of self for racialized/gendered/hypersexualized people. Studies on the sex trade illustrate how women interact with power dynamics that render them desirable and work within these systems to make desire work for them. For example, Megan Rivers-Moore's study on sex industries in Costa Rica illuminates how women in Costa Rica negotiate their position as desirable objections of consumptions for "gringos" traveling through.

Similarly, Amalia Cabezas and Amaya Shaeffer document the complicated sex and cybermarriage industries in Dominican Republic, Cuba, Mexico, and Colombia. Like Mireille-Miller Young and José Esteban Muñoz's theoretical contributions to understanding how people of color manipulate ideologies, sex workers learn to gesture toward a complicated sexual history and disrupt historical systems that position sexual labor as free. Gloria Anzaldúa discusses similar notions of subversive political gestures utilized as survival tactics to complicate understandings of women of color and marginalized people. Her concept of "haciendo caras", making face, making soul, outlines the shapeshifting abilities inherent in women of color and other marginalized groups. Her connection of "haciendo caras" as a survival tactic is a foundational framework for understanding everyday interactions as

political. The gestures produced and manipulated by racialized gendered people illustrate the inherent nature of survival and the cooptation of ideological tropes imposed on sexualities. Sexual economies are at the forefront of disrupting gender ideologies and are consistently disciplined and punished for these transgressions.

Juana María Rodríguez, like Anzaldúa, extends the concept of embodied gestures. Rodríguez identifies a social system that assigns cultural meanings to specific bodies. She states, "Thinking about queerness through gesture animates how bodies move in the world, and how we assign meaning in the ways that are always already infused with cultural modes of knowing." (Rodríguez, 2). Strategic forms of embodied gestures create a venue for political work. Rodríguez states, "As a mode of critique, gesture emphasizes how a cascade of everyday actions is capable of altering political life. As a way of articulating political action, gesture highlights intentions, process, and practice over objectives and certainty." (Rodríguez, 5) Through this framework, political work becomes accessible to gendered and racialized people who are otherwise cast as victims, rather than agential members of society. Gesture flirts with our understanding of corporeality and proper corporeal containment. Latinx and queer contexts expose the gendered racialized body as purposefully excessive. Racialized gendered bodies are read as inherently excessive and relational, but this fact unearths an interactive relationship between power and racialized, sexualized people. Gestures are constantly communicating with fixed assumptions infused with our cultural modes of knowing. Racialized excess, as Rodriguez argues, is a form of embodied gesture that challenges gender systems. She says:

> Our racialized excess is already read as queer, outside norms of what is useful or productive. (Is that much color, spice, pattern, noise ever truly necessary?) Forever tacky, the viscosity of our excess grates across the surfaces we touch. As sissies,

> butches, and spectacles of high-femme fabulousness, we produce gendered performances of overt desire that rouse discomfort. (Rodríguez, 2)

Cardi B embodies purposeful arousal of discomfort. Her use of her body, her tongue, and her Bronx accent is strategically invoked to cause anxiety and uncertainty. I posit that her use of gesture is directly tied not only to her position as a black Latina but also to her history as a former sex worker navigating oppressive gender systems. Flirting, Fucking, and Taunting are technologies born from sex worker consciousness, invoking gestures in the process. These technologies flirt with, fuck with, and taunt through the manipulation of power, masculinity, and sexuality.

"I'm a Ho. A strippa ho. Whashpoppin?": Hoeness and Sex Worker Consciousness

Cardi B began her ascension to fame through Instagram. She utilized this platform to share her ideas and world viewpoints with her followers. A typical Cardi B Instagram video ranged from her lying down at home, in between sets at the strip club, or hanging with friends. This connection style with an audience is like a popular YouTube style called Vlogging. Vlogging showcases an intimate look into people's lives. These videos are posted online, allowing strangers to form meaningful connections with YouTube creators. Typically, vlogs are filmed using the front camera on the phone or a regular camera through selfie mode. Cardi followed a similar intimate style and invited viewers into her life via Instagram, using her front phone camera to film herself directly speaking to her followers. Cardi utilized this style to assert her position as a "strippa ho." In a video posted to her Instagram account in 2016, Cardi films herself through a front-facing camera. She playfully speaks to her followers, addressing them as if she were talking to her close friends. She explains that people cannot understand her existence and attempt to categorize her as a model or comedian. She says:

> "So you know people be asking me like 'what do you does like are you a model? Are you like a comedian or something?' Nah, I ain't none of that I'm a ho I'm a strippa ho I'm about this shhmoney whasspoppin?"

Cardi ends the video with laughter and sticks her tongue out at the camera. This gesture weaves her assertion as a ho and her understanding of how her gendered and racialized labor is illegible to those around her. She elicits a sense of pride in her self-identification as a stripper ho and taunts those who see her as a waste of time and space. I theorize her self-categorization as a "ho" as a playful taunting of power from the position of a sex worker. Her identity as a black Latina sex worker directly embodies the intersection of racialized sexual labor and black and Latina sexuality.

Black women in rap have historically invoked narratives of hypersexuality in their work and have long illustrated the interconnective nature of sexuality and economic vulnerability. Artists like Foxy Brown, Lil Kim, and Trina, to name a few, have positioned their sexual and aesthetic labor as something that must be paid for. Hip Hop scholars have theorized how women in rap push the boundaries of appropriate femininity and embodiment. Cardi surfaces with explicit connections to this historic legacy, and I assert that her relation to the sex trade is a formative aspect of her identity. To be a ho, like being a "sucia," is being aligned with Black and Latina excessive sexualities. But being a ho also signals a direct opposition to the categorization of gender. I assert that hoeness stems from the intersection of racialized femininities such as black women's sexualities and being a sex worker.

I understand hoeness as a political consciousness that stems from people's struggles in the sex trade. In this dissertation, hoeness is synonymous with a sex worker consciousness because I seek to excavate the political significance of hoeness as directly aligned with the sex

trade. The purpose of naming hoeness as sex worker discourse is that it forces us to recognize the cultural contributions of sex workers, and black sex workers and how they influence popular culture. In chapter one, I argued that sex workers illuminate a contentious relationship between people who work in sexual economies and the State, which categorizes them as criminals. Sex workers especially racialized sex workers, put their bodies on the line with no protections from the State. Sex workers are at the forefront of challenging gendered labor dynamics, and their cultural work directly impacts popular culture production like rap. Scholarship on black women in Hip Hop has emphasized the cultural influence that black women's sexualities have played in the shifting of cultural logic. To fully understand the tensions between women's sexual labor and the State, sex workers must be at the forefront of our analyses. Cardi B is a crucial example of illuminating how black sex workers contribute to cultural shifts and are seldom recognized for it. Mireille Miller-Young's "ho theory" scholarship gives historical context to understand the ho. "As public women who use sex for their own interests (be they profit or pleasure) rather than for the reproduction of the racial community, hoes are not only outside of black respectability politics, they are utterly loathed" (Miller-Young, 163, 2014). I argue that the ho is born from a sex worker consciousness, from an understanding of their own bodies and sexual labor as a resource that can be owned, sold, and traded. The articulation of a sex worker consciousness incites fear and loathing, often ascribed to women even outside the sex trade.

Cardi B embodies and perpetuates a more significant idea of what I understand as sex worker discourse. Sex worker discourse actively challenges the logic of heteronormative labor and gender politics and positions work itself as exploitative and stems from a Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness. Sex workers occupy a specific state of being, violently surveilled and

culturally criticized. Sex worker discourse is the logic that challenges the entire economic and gender system. Sex workers position sexual labor as individually owned and eligible to be sold at the discretion of individuals. Sex workers and sex worker discourse are violently disciplined and silenced through exclusionary tactics that render them further vulnerable. To be a sex worker is to occupy the world as a targeted worker with no worker protections or resources. To be a sex worker is to inhabit a world where your body is perceived as a threat, even to mainstream feminists. Feminist scholar, Angela Jones, interrogates the complexities of webcam sex workers as neoliberal agents who also shift narratives of women's pleasure (Jones, 2016). I borrow Jones' framework in centering pleasure as a potentially disruptive tool to interrogate further Cardi B's role as a cultural worker disrupting gender ideology about sex, feminized labor, and joy for working-class women who are otherwise excluded from feminist imaginaries.

Black women's sexualities are historically linked to the accumulation of wealth. In Marxist terms, black women's sexual labor has served as primitive accumulation for the U.S. in its creation of an empire. Black feminist theorists have documented the relationship between black sexualities and economic expansion, outlining how black sexualities have, from the inception of the U.S. nation, served as currency for growth. I argue that, similarly, Latina sexualities have been essential for U.S. expansion into Latin American countries. However, while excess sexualities are a covert aspect of Latina sexualities, there is a significant investment in suppressing legacies of hypersexuality. I argue that Latina sexualities are enveloped in ideas of respectability precisely because of the U.S.'s relationship with countries in Latin America. In chapter one, I outlined sexual desire's role in categorizing Latin American countries as economically desirable. The Latina Body functions as an anti-black and anti-

Indigenous signifier that poises the U.S. to justify conquering land through the façade of positive economic expansion. Latina sexualities play a critical role here because the ripeness of land that the U.S. covets mirrors the imagined and constructed desire of The Latina Body.

However, respectability here is crucial. This desire is formulated and constructed with the understanding that the façade of this desire is fickle. It is an arbitrary categorization that positions The Latina Body as more desirable. In her 2020 study "Aesthetics of Excess," Jillian Hernandez's findings open a discussion within Latina Sexualities Studies that illuminates an implicit fear or disgust of being associated with black sexualities. I posit that this fear of being associated with Blackness is directly connected to how the U.S. views expansion within the Western Hemisphere.

Cardi embodies the unspoken concerns of recognizing the existence of Blackness within Latinidad and the fear of identifying sexual economies and those who participate in them. Her public position as a former sex worker illuminates a break with traditional understandings of a respectable Latina femininity. Cardi brings forth a critical perspective that unearths the relationships between racialized sexualities and political economy. The "ho" is born from a complicated history of exploitation directly stemming from black women's historical context. Black women's sexualities have played an essential and foundational role in mainstream culture such as rap and hip hop. Themes of sexuality have tiptoed the line of indecency while simultaneously reaping the benefits of high-selling pornographic content in mainstream hip hop (Miller-Young, 2014).

Sex Worker Discourse is Feminist Labor Discourse

Sex worker activists continuously counter ideas of sex work as de facto exploitative work by analyzing poverty as a coercive tool that aids the State in ensuring that cheap labor of

all sorts is constantly available. Poverty, borders, and access to resources via citizenship play a lucrative role in rendering populations vulnerable to economic exploitation (Juno & Smith 2019). Many conversations around sex work are tied to questions of morality. For example, sex work exclusionary radical feminists (SWERFs) have historically conflated sex trafficking with sex work and argue that sex work is always exploitative. The question of whether work itself, not just sex work, is exploitative is something that sex workers bring forth at the risk of being told to stop participating in exploitative sexual economies. Juno Mac and Molly Smith's *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights* and Kathi Weeks' *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* move the conversation of sex work to a centered analysis of issues with poverty and working conditions. Sex workers and sex worker consciousness are at the forefront of questioning labor rights and poverty for working-class people. Sex workers fight for labor protections while advancing a political stance that refuses work. Postwork Imaginaries ask why basic human needs are tied to a protestant view of work ethic. The following questions remain highly debated within sex worker communities. Why does work inherently define ethics and worth for individuals in society? Why the urge to identify sex work as work to gain protection and humanity? Can sex work be positioned as antiwork? (Hacking//Hustling 2021). Cardi begins to tussle with these questions and centers on the role of racialized women's sexualities, how they are policed, and why the ownership of their sexualities is constantly up for debate. In an Instagram video posted to her personal account, Cardi explains the contradictions poor people face when dealing with public programs. She brings forth her friend as an example of these contradictions, stating,

> I have a homegirl and she makes 10 dollars a hour in her job. She has a baby. She don't qualify for food stamps because supposedly she makes too much money. But yet she can't find a place to live because you know rent in New York City is too much. And

> what I'm saying is do you have to have four kids and make two dollars an hour so you can qualify for goddamn food stamps in New York?

Cardi positions the challenges many single mothers face in the U.S. as rigged systems inherently designed to perpetuate harm for working-class people. Sex workers and sex worker consciousness directly address structural inequalities perpetuating poverty for people of color in the U.S., questioning why sex work is demonized for granting poor people access to higher earning potential. In an interview with VladTV, she says,

> "I don't understand why stripping is such a sin. What is such a sin? To be honest, stripping practically like saved me. It's like; I used to beg, I used to pray to God, like please God, change my life, please. I used to work at Amish market, like please God, I need help. I'm so hungry, like I'm so broke" (Cardi B, Vlad TV interview).

Her motivation for entering the sex trade is directly connected to her socioeconomic vulnerability. She sheds light on the low wages that working-class people are expected to live on and actively challenges the shame associated with choosing, and sometimes being economically coerced, to enter the sex trade.

At the start of Cardi B's career, she endured endless harassment online, and this harassment continues throughout her presence in popular culture. Her comment sections were often a hub for attacks on dancers and sex workers broadly and questioning their contributions to society and their role as workers. On October 25, 2017, Cardi B posted a video to her personal Instagram account discussing themes of labor that dancers participate in. In this same timeframe, a New York City stripper strike began. The video currently has 6363625 views and 10.2 k comments. In the video, you see Cardi B in the front seat of a car, looking directly at the camera; she begins,

> You know what I hate? I hate when people do videos throwing money at strippers or bartenders and people be like, "oh um what a waste of money why you throwing money at strippers" and shit and its like because they entertaining. Don't you pay money to see artist in concerts? Yeah. Don't you pay money to the circus? Yeah. Don't y'all pay

> to see sport game? Yes. Because its entertainment and its like "Oh you can help somebody that's in need" They are in need. They need to pay they rent. They need to feed they kids. They need to live. They need to survive. The fuck. I know when I was a stripper I needed money. You know what I'm saying like when I get booked to host in these strip clubs I don't gotta throw money but I still do because I know how hard these bitches work and it's like they need money. It's so easy for you motherfuckers to tell people what to do with other people money. The fuck. Stop doing that.

Her direct confrontation to any discrediting of dancers and bartenders, women using erotic capital to advance their socioeconomic standing, speaks to her alliance with sex workers. Her explicit questioning of legitimate labor directly questions our historical understanding of the access of women's bodies. Through her platform as an Instagram personality, Cardi B introduces an articulation and meditation of deviant femininities that challenge heteronormative assumptions about the body. Her well-documented solidarity and alignment with working-class struggles illuminate an intersecting component to her identity as a former sex worker. Cardi enters the world stage by loudly and unapologetically framing feminist sex worker issues as working-class and labor issues.

Sex worker consciousness is an articulation of an internalized understanding of how racialized people interact with power in the world. Sex workers learn to strategically employ technologies of resistance. Sex worker consciousness is specific to the experiences of people who participate in sexual economies because they are hyper-criminalized and in turn, learn how to navigate power in specific, strategic ways. In chapter one, I argued that the history of criminalization for sex workers has generated survival strategies and techniques where workers create intra networks of care and support since they are left to fend for themselves by the State and localized sex worker exclusionary groups. Cardi's documented understanding of the intricacies faced by working-class women of color follows the same practices that sex worker communities depend on for the survival and well-being of their communities. In the following

section, I argue that Cardi B's sex worker consciousness and political alignment played a crucial role in how she navigates the Hip Hop industry, often emphasizing collaborations and prioritizing profit and success for many women. Yet at the beginning of her career especially, Cardi was chastised and belittled for her overt articulation of sex worker discourse.

The Reunion Fight and Whorephobia

Following Cardi B's success on the social media platform Instagram, Cardi joined the cast of *Love & Hip Hop New York*. This reality show features hip-hop artists navigating the music industry and the interpersonal conflicts that arise. Her character development in this program mirrored her social media presence. Cardi B was known as the former stripper turned rapper with a slick mouth filled with social commentary around racialized sexualities and labor. Much of her screen time was filled with her thoughts on dealing with men; how to squeeze resources from them in exchange for her time. Her time on *Love & Hip Hop* was an entry point into mainstream media outlets and exposed her to more considerable opportunities for success. As Cardi B's popularity intensified, much of the tension she experienced on the show grew. A notable example was the blowout fight between Cardi B and cast mate Peter Gunz at the 2016 reunion live filming.

During the reunion episode, Peter Gunz verbally confronted Cardi B. It became evident that Gunz could not control his disgust and disapproval of Cardi B and her outward opinions about femininity, labor, and gender; this disgust, I argue, was also correlated with Cardi B's public past as a stripper. I theorize Cardi's ideological position as a woman demanding compensation for her sexual and emotional work. His attempts to verbally discipline Cardi B's position reflect more significant attitudes associated with sex worker communities and

ideological strategies that place sex workers in vulnerable situations through implicit and explicit tactics stemming from whorephobia. Whorephobia refers to

> ...the fear or the hate of sex workers. Sex workers like me would argue that it also embraces paternalistic attitudes that deem us a public nuisance, spreaders of disease, offenders against decency, or unskilled victims who don't know what is good for them and who need to be rescued" (Schaffauser, 2010).

Whorephobia functions as a disciplinary tactic, and in its most violent form, it is responsible for physical harm such as murder. However, whorephobia is experienced and enacted on a spectrum ranging from direct physical violence to indirect violence, such as denying resources, housing, and economic opportunities. At its most insidious, whorephobia is invoked under the guise of "care" while doing little to address structural inequalities that perpetuate poverty. Taboo and stigma around sex work are often reinforced by publicly shaming and doxing sex workers. The reunion special is a case study illustrating how whorephobia disciplines sex worker discourse. Cardi B's background as a former dancer in New York City has been public information since her ascension to fame. I analyze the many aggressive responses she received through public discourse on Instagram to theorize her public alliance with sex workers and sex worker discourse. Cardi embodies a critical moment where sex worker politics meet mainstream audiences. I also analyze Peter Gunz's aggressive response to Cardi B during the reunion special as an example of how the State positions sex workers as criminals who must be silenced and punished for their transgressions.

Cardi B’s body is a site of theoretical world-making. Her articulations of a sex worker consciousness address issues of agency and power for working-class women of color. Throughout Cardi B’s early career, she was infamously known for her history as an Instagram

character. Her strong personality and willingness to question gender constraints kept Cardi B relevant to gender, labor, and sexuality discussions. She intoxicated the world with witty, unapologetic views and inspired conversations about sexual agency and respectability. Her reputation for "using guys" and manipulating masculinity to gain financial autonomy derived from her time as a strip club dancer. She not only exposed unequal expectations based on gender, but she also encouraged working-class women to deviate from appropriateness and question gender logic. Cardi B's presence in online and mainstream discourses introduced an outward sex work discourse that ruptured an imposed social order and logic.

The transgressive nature of Cardi B's articulation of sex worker consciousness incites fear and violent responses. Her time on *Love & Hip Hop: New York* and her confrontation with Peter Gunz at the season six reunion special showcased the affective reactions of disgust to Cardi B's body and overt sex worker consciousness. The reunion fight is a case study explicating how ideology works tirelessly to violently discipline sex workers into so-called appropriate embodiments of femininity at every opportunity. The interview begins,

Nina (Interviewer): Cardi, what is the craziest thing you've used a man for?
Cardi B: You pay my rent for six months straight because you like me.
Nina: And that's happened?
Cardi B: Yeah, of course, it happens
Nina: Okay
Another cast member: But Nina, every relationship is about being used. That's what it's about. You're in a relationship to take something from the relationship. And to give something.
Cardi B: A lot of these men will tell you like, 'listen, I got a wife, but I wanna have a good time.' Oh, and I got bills and want them to be paid.
(Audience laughter and agreement)

Cardi B outlines her logic for expecting compensation for her sexual labor, referencing the complicated reality of sex workers who often have married clients. When Cardi asserts, "A lot of these men will tell you like 'listen, I got a wife, but I wanna have a good time.' Oh, and I got bills, and I want them to be paid," she exposes the unspoken social contract that the sex

industry implicitly promises. Discretion is a highly coveted service within the sex industry, and sex workers often navigate the contradictions that heterosexual men inhabit. For instance, in chapter one of this dissertation, I detailed María Lugones's "The Colonial Modern Gender System" theoretical framework explaining how coloniality and accumulation processes are directly tied to gender. A prerequisite for the expansion of capital is the ability to trace inheritance. Under this organization of gender, purity becomes a necessary social construction that monitors wealth. However, racialized women are not monitored like white women since racialized women's reproduction does not carry the stakes of inheritance. Purity, therefore, becomes a complex organizational tool that closely regulates how people who can reproduce experience their sexualities. At the same time, monogamous heterosexual coupling is a prerequisite required for the reproduction of wealth. Black studies and decolonial scholars have documented how the inheritance of wealth required a Victorian-inspired virtue. This virtue is directly connected to a historical assurance that white women, the reproducers of wealth, were monogamous as not to risk unreliable inheritance. White upper-class women are considered the picture of femininity, practicing minimalist embodiments of sexuality, and banned from practicing sexual deviance. Therefore, women who sell sex are the antithesis of proper images of femininity.

Cardi B unmasks a social categorization of gender that she is expected to comply with and demands she be compensated for participating in the social categorization she is placed in. Her notions of egalitarian exchange expose her dedication to holding ideology accountable and questioning the belief of inferiority of racialized sexualities. Her disruption and unearthing prompt a violent response from Peter Gunz. The interview continues as Peter Gunz interrupts:

Peter Gunz: Let me say this real quick. For a woman to say 'You want some of this ass? You want some of this pussy? I want some money.' That's…that's…that's hoein.

Cardi B and other cast members in sync: That's not hoein.
Cardi B: That's not hoein. I don't gotta give guys ass or pussy to get what I want from them.
Peter Gunz: No, let me speak…
Another cast member: That's not what she's saying. What she's saying is 'If I fuck with a n***a and you wanna lay down with me don't you want me to have somewhere to wash my ass? You don't want me to have somewhere to lay down?'
Peter Gunz: I guess what I'm trying to say…
Another cast member: But it's okay for the first day for you to ask a chick for some ass though? That's okay.
Peter Gunz: I'm not asking a chick…
Cardi B: You got a lotta love from me you gotta a lotta everything you wanted from me so it's like why can't I get some back? Look what you gave Amina and Tara? Babies! And That's it.
Peter Gunz: No that's not it.
Cardi B: Are you paying both of they rent?
Peter Gunz: Yes
Cardi B: You know you not paying they rent!
Amina: He pays his part.
Nina: Amina?
Amina: He pays his part,

In this instance, Peter Gunz becomes a social agent of ideology, working towards surveilling women's bodies. Gunz's disgust and harsh, aggressive response is an inherent need to discipline and question, to put down, to dominate, that stems from a gender system that has not only given him access to women as bottomless resources but that has also equipped him to defend the system itself at all costs. This gender system has allowed him to exercise power, to view Cardi B as unproductive within the context of capitalism, and to view her as an exploitable body rather than an agential member of society. Peter Gunz is granted a false power that benefits gender hierarchy, and when Cardi B questions this false power, we see a violent reaction. The interview continues,

Peter Gunz: First off do you know me?
Cardi B: I see what I see on TV and men like you are the type of men that I be talking about. You need to get from these guys what you want. You get pussy outta both of them. And what are they getting in return? What are they getting in return?
Peter Gunz: We got love.
Cardi B: They look stupid on TV.
Peter Gunz: You don't know me like that. I don't know if one of them butt shots leaked into your bloodstream but you being very disrespectful right now.

Cardi B: Well, thank God none of your nut is in my bloodstream cause I be damned. You know who I is. Get the fuck outta here.
Peter Gunz: You know who I am. You know who I AM.
Nina: Let's stop. Let's Stop.
Cardi B: A old washed-up n***a that be fucking bitches life up and they reputation
Peter Gunz: Listen…
Cardi B: She's a talented ass woman and Tara is smart ass woman and you got them looking dumb on TV. Men like you need to get used.
Peter Gunz: Degrading…Sweetheart…Let me tell you something. You don't even love yourself.
Cardi B: I do love myself.
Peter Gunz: You don't love yourself.
Cardi B: Love your wife!
Peter Gunz: Go back to the basement where you got your ass done and your tits done!
Cardi B: Love your wife and love your kids!
Peter Gunz: I do love them!
Cardi B: Have more respect for them!
Peter Gunz: I do love them!
Cardi B: Look how you show your daughters how your women should get treated!
Peter Gunz: Shut the fuck up!
Cardi B: You think that's good?
Peter Gunz: Who are you?
Cardi B: You know who the fuck I is!

This interaction on live television, which I deem historic, is, as Muñoz argues with disidentifications, an attempt to transform cultural logic regarding sexuality as labor. The violent retaliation from Peter Gunz can be traced to our historical understanding of black women and other women of color's bodies being inherently accessible to men and, more broadly, capitalism. The tension we witness as participants in the audience is the tension identified when attempting to break out of imposed gender logic.

Diana Khong's insightful analysis on "Scamming Aesthetics" details popular culture's fascination with scamming, defined as the manipulation of a mark for economic gain. Khong defines the scamming archetype as "the desire for financial gain and material possessions and the emotional disregard of men." (Khong 2020). I borrow "Scamming Aesthetics" to push my understanding of Cardi's position as a former sex worker and how sex work plays a central

part in shaping popular culture. I argue that in fact, scamming is a direct descendant of sex worker consciousness, and sex workers are not credited for these contributions because of the taboo nature of people who participate in the sex trade. Cardi B is a case study for how sex worker consciousness flirts with, fucks with, and taunts gender systems. Sex workers introduce the origin story of scamming by "stealing" sexual labor that is otherwise already owned by the State. Sex workers work tirelessly to hack oppressive gender dynamics that position them as simultaneously dangerous to public health and vulnerable victims in need of saving. The reunion episode detailed above illustrates Cardi's process of making the logic of scamming public, and Gunz verbally disciplines her for doing so.

Cardi B's identity as a black Latina plays a particularly crucial role in negotiating and displaying her body and sexual labor on the world stage. Anti-black sentiments exist globally and are no different within Latinx communities. I critically engage with whiteness to argue that it functions as an aspirational power dynamic that disillusions and morphs our understanding of power. As a category of power, whiteness creates inter-community hierarchies and discrimination systems within Latinx communities. As George Lipsitz understands it, there is an investment in whiteness that transcends racial classification. Latinx communities display investment in whiteness through a separationist approach to Latinx and black relations. Cardi's embodied convergence of blackness and Latinidad explores a vital tension. Her identity as a Latina invokes a historical legacy of desire, contradicting her identity as a black woman. As I previously argued in chapter one, Latinidad, when uninterrogated, suggests the blanqueamiento of Latinx identities. Jomaira Salas Pujol's 2020 study on Afro-Latina Black identity development centers the Latinx home as a site of anti-Black aspirations of mestizaje. "Research has long documented how Latinx households maintain the ideology of

mestizaje, or race-mixing, through practices that encourage young people to reject Black identity" (Salas Pujol, 2020). Cardi exists at the margins of Blackness and Latinidad, making her a target of scrutiny within black and Latinx communities. However, her marginalized identity allows for a playful invocation of Latinidad, often placing her in an advantageous position in the entertainment industry. I also theorize her cultural identity as a Latina as further exasperating desires that her body elicits. Cardi B invokes legacies of hyperfertility and hypersexuality stemming from stereotypes of black and Latina women, making her desirable and loathed. Mireille Miller-Young's writings on "Ho Theory" provide an essential framework for understanding how Cardi B makes the legacy of black women's sexualities and Latina excess work for her. Her unique position as a black Latina and a sex worker makes her especially vulnerable to whorephobic scrutiny precisely because she carries the paternalistic ideologies imposed by U.S.-Global South relations and patriarchal understandings of women's bodies and sex workers' labor.

Michel Foucault's *Discipline & Punish* outlines the subtleness of discipline to make sense of the "gentleness" that power enacts when establishing dominance and control. This "gentleness" references a less physical form of punishment and a more ideological process that allows everyday people to participate in policing themselves and others. Similarly, Antonio Gramsci's term hegemony defines an ideological carceral arm that empowers ordinary citizens to create and maintain good subjects. There are "gentle" forms of assuring that your neighbor, best friend, internet friend, are not violating various social contracts. For example, many responses to Cardi B's public discourse generated comments that directly attacked Cardi's character. Her comment sections were filled with disapproving comments meant to shame her back into proper womanhood, that is, a woman who does not understand her sexual labor as

something that can be owned and sold. Perhaps Cardi B's most seemingly difficult position is her unapologetic alliance with sex worker communities and her self-proclaimed identity as a "stripper ho." Cardi outwardly violates the social contract that states that women and their sexual labor belong to the State and therefore becomes a target for disciplining.

The reunion fight is a critical indexical moment in understanding long-time-coming challenges to logics of femininity, sex, race, and the entire gender system under global capitalism. This chapter asserts Cardi B's digital presence as a sex worker and cultural icon to be a significant paradigm shift in how sex workers, and their contributions to society, are reacted to and understood. I center this reunion fight as an embodied performance, a lived experience illuminating the reality of the hostile exchanges that black women and women of color's bodies face against an oppressive state apparatus.

"Why Don't You Chill with the Beef and Get Some Chicken Instead?": Cardi B and Sex Worker Movidas in Hip Hop

Sex workers navigate contentious political positions and rely on one another for support because institutional programs abandon them. Sex workers hold each other up, and this practice is directly connected to the precarious nature of the industry. Safety tips and mutual aid networks keep survival workers, indeed all workers, afloat, and these community practices bloom despite institutionalized violence that works to discredit and disappear workers. These tactics include financial discrimination and stolen funds from banks that take morality stands and refuse to do business with adult entertainers (Peepshow Podcast, 2021). The BIPOC Adult Industry Collective was "founded in response to conversations regarding racism in adult entertainment" and exemplifies how sex worker communities advocate for safety and dignity in sex industries. The BIPOC Adult Industry Collective's approach to support emphasizes the

success of all those choosing to enter the sex trades. This collective is born out of informal networks of care created and sustained by workers. Rebelle Cunt describes these networks and states,

> In the past few months, we've lost quite a few sex workers. Before we even have a moment to process, we begin planning around funeral costs, survival needs for family and friends and what memorializing and celebrating our loved ones looks like. We gather and mobilize. We pass around the same $20 – $100 to help each other through. We take a second to feel and get back to work. We light candles and pour out libations on the block. (Cunt 2021)

These practices stem from a political position of supporting workers traditionally excluded from

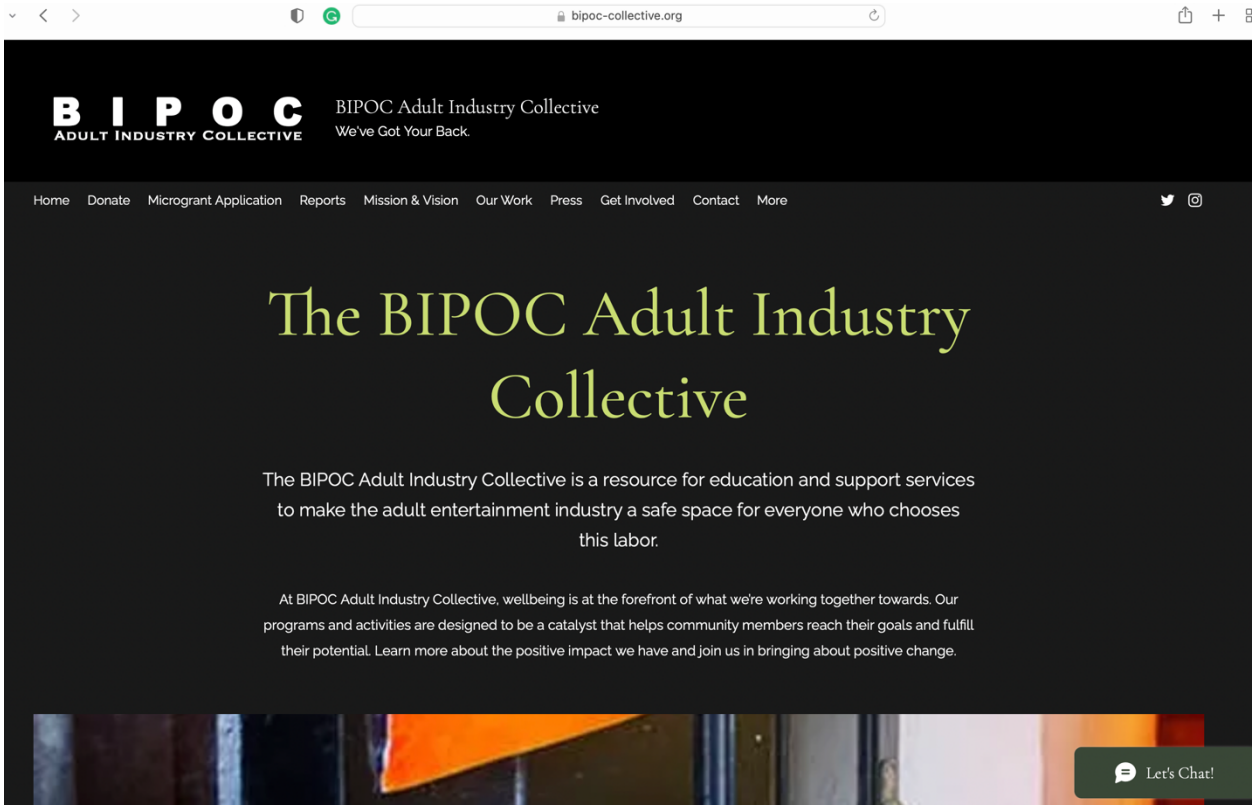

Figure 3.1. Screenshot, BIPOC Adult Industry Collective website

protection, and support networks. BIPOC Adult Industry Collective also addressed the historical racism that black women face because their erotic labor is hierarchized as less than. These networks are often positioned and organized underground, to avoid further criminalization amongst these communities.

In the introduction of *Chicana Movidas: New Narratives of Activism and Feminism in the Movement Era*, the authors frame women's contributions to movement building as Chicana feminist practices. They integrate Chela Sandoval's definition of "movidas as a repertoire of 'revolutionary maneuvers' and 'technologies' that 'grasp meaning—transforming and moving it on both sides […], a political site for the third meaning, that obtuse shimmering of signification that glances through every binary opposition." (Cotera, Blackwell, Espizona 2018). Movidas are strategic and tactful but also remain underground. I put movidas in conversation with Cardi B and sex workers because Cardi B utilizes sex worker politics in her approach in mainstream hip-hop circles. Her use of movidas emphasizes collaboration for women in rap. I employ movidas to Cardi's approach here because of the subversive nature of rejecting masculinist and divisive approaches to women's collaboration in hip-hop. Through Cardi's political alignment with sex worker communities, Cardi shifted mainstream approaches to collaboration through her strategic movidas that prioritized making money with other women rappers over industry tensions. Her strategic partnerships granted her access to opportunities to break more records and share financial success with other black women rappers. The industry itself, and fanbases, worked tirelessly to position Cardi B in opposition to leading rappers such as Nicki Minaj. Unfortunately, the relationship between Cardi B and Nicki Minaj quickly deteriorated. While I place Cardi as a subversive actor in the rap industry, I do not lay any claim that positions Minaj as opposition to sex workers and the politically

subversive tactics of sex workers. Instead, I am critical of the rap industry. The rap industry is enveloped in misogynist practices that work to position women's roles as scarce and therefore needing to be battled over. These claims remain steadfast in the sex trades. However, sex workers work tirelessly to combat divisive strategies and create support systems instead. I also do not claim that sex worker communities are a feminist collaboration utopia. However, I do argue that sex worker consciousness disrupts de facto competition over collaboration narratives. Sex workers learn to navigate competitive markets while holding to sex worker politics which understand the precarious nature of the sex trades and therefore create intercommunal support.

Cleaning Up an Image—Erasing Sex Work from Cardi B's Stardom

I began writing about Cardi B in 2015. Cardi was not yet cast in *Love & Hip Hop* at the time, and her fame was confined to Instagram timelines. Her lack of sponsorship at the early stages of her career granted her a sense of freedom and authenticity. Since her ascension to mainstream fame, Cardi B's social media presence has drastically changed, and her personal Instagram has been scrubbed of any hint of past articulations of sex worker consciousness. Her candid videos are no longer available on Instagram. Instead, you must excavate her old selfie-styled videos from fan accounts that serve as archives of past videos. As I close this chapter, it would be irresponsible not to address the "cleaning up" of Cardi's image. Cardi has a complicated relationship with social media platforms. Before her sudden fame, the administration constantly deleted her Instagram account. Cardi never cited her relationship with sex work as being the cause of abrupt deletion. However, shadowbanning and other discriminatory practices aimed at sex workers online are highly documented and criticized by sex workers who use these platforms. Her initial issues with these platforms are now an

afterthought, as she continuously reveals collaborations and deals with platforms like Facebook. Her mini-series, Cardi Tries, is broadcasted on Facebook TV. While these deals are being announced, sex workers are seeing increased surveillance and banning from sites that help them advertise their services to make a living.

Cardi openly discussed her management team's requiring her to attend media training classes and etiquette classes as she quickly rose to new heights in her career beginning in 2017. The contradictory nature of her success is evident in that her role as a sex worker allowed her to transcend digital imaginaries, the labor of sex workers positioned her as a new face of rap, yet her branding practices place her as a "cleaned-up" version of a dancer in New York City. This chapter worked on naming the role of sex workers' labor and consciousness in disrupting notions of respectability. Cardi B is a binding site in excavating this labor. However, this chapter also ends with the understanding that black women's erotic labor, to borrow from Miller-Young's metaphor of brown sugar, is a resource that dissolves and goes unnoticed. Sex workers' contributions are "cleaned out" of our understanding of feminisms, economic justice, and disruptions of gender ideologies.

Chapter Three

Link in Bio: Latinas Negotiating Surveillance, Hypersexuality, and Racialization on OnlyFans.com

We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair. (Cohen, 1996, p. 17)

They already see me like a slut, might as well get paid, you know what I'm saying? (Libertad, Personal Interview, July 2021)

Hips tick-tock when I dance. On that Demon Time, she might start an OnlyFans.
-Beyoncé on "Savage" by Meghan Thee Stallion ft. Beyoncé

In March 2020, *COVID-19* shelter-in-place orders in the United States catalyzed social anxieties of inequality and disruptions of social relations. Amongst much uncertainty, this period forced "non-essential" workers into remote work and an overall standstill for privileged workers. At the same time, "essential workers" were left to fend for themselves as a widespread infectious virus was overtaking poor, working-class, and communities of color. This social fragmentation radically shifted labor relations in the country. During this period, work culture in the United States underwent a rupturing that illuminated the sticky relationship between coercion and choice in all forms of work.

For "frontline" or "essential" workers, this period illuminated uncertainties about the future and exacerbated fears of workplace safety and long-term unemployment. With no sign of protection for the most vulnerable workers, such as undocumented workers and workers in informal economies, individual workers were left to continue working, find alternatives to in-person work, or risk unemployment. This brief adjustment period of remote work and social distancing practices resulted in creative alternatives to human physical connections for privileged workers. Family and friends relied on technology to participate in celebrations, community building, and everyday mundane activities while digitally connected with others online. The internet became a communal opportunity for connection in an otherwise difficult

time to commune. Before this, there was no mainstream understanding of how the Internet could be a binding site for intimacies, even outside eroticism. The Internet illuminated globally that technology functions as a site for human intimacy.

At the same time, there was much economic uncertainty; service workers were being laid off due to restaurant closures, slower business operations, growing uncertainty about the future of aid, growing childcare costs, food costs, energy costs, and an overall rise in economic responsibilities for everyday people. While prices continued to skyrocket, work simultaneously became a highly questionable aspect of society. Before the pandemic, work culture and the idea of a strong work ethic dominated how people in the U.S. understood their relationship with work (Weeks 2011). The pandemic ruptured many ideas about how we organize our time and our labor, and these facts resulted in what is known as The Great Resignation.

While rising unemployment numbers began to signal a more prominent symptom of disdain and unfulfillment with work culture for many in the U.S., not everyone had the same access to participate in this seemingly anti-work phenomenon. Social programs such as unemployment became increasingly normalized for those impacted by *COVID-19*. However, aid programs were not easily accessible, with distributions of federal dollars from the Emergency Rental Assistance Programs (ERAP) moving at an alarmingly slow rate. Many populations were left to fend for themselves. Billions of dollars were distributed through the federal government's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) program to cities and counties throughout the U.S. with little to no oversight of how the dollars were distributed. The goal of ARPA was to invest in communities disproportionately impacted by *COVID-19*. ARPA dollars were meant to be flexible and address

Figure 4.1 “I QUIT!”—Photograph was taken by the author. Florida, U.S.A. February 2022.

the immediate needs of disenfranchised communities throughout the U.S., including premium pay for essential workers, road funding, recreational space, housing, and broadband infrastructure. The mismanagement became increasingly possible because of the lack of oversight over local government's allocation plans. Many local governments allocated ARPA funds towards “public safety” initiatives, such as increasing police budgets, and gave

microscopic amounts of funds toward affordable housing initiatives. Various communities were essentially abandoned by their government officials in a country continuously pushing narratives of prosperity and success.

Undocumented people and people participating in informal economies (such as sex workers in the U.S.) were barred from accessing ERAP, ARPA dollars, and other aid forms. Essential workers and workers in informal economies often rely heavily on work to make ends meet. Essential workers, often undocumented, were among the highest percentage of workers coerced into working under precarious and dangerous conditions. *COVID-19* bluntly unveiled a public secret in the U.S.: there are few social programs or infrastructure to support the people who belong to this nation and who work to continue production even as a global pandemic brought the world to a halt.

The stay-at-home orders, job insecurity, and a strong desire for human connection only available through virtual technology birthed a unique supply and demand for sexual content sold online. The Internet became a portal of possibilities for how intimacy and connection could transcend in-person relations. Intimacies formed online quickly became a mainstream expectation that amplified sex work industries. With the growing use of the Internet for intimate relationships, opportunities for sex workers to engage in work safely and creatively also grew. The pandemic caused many sex workers to seek alternatives to in-person work. At the same time, sexual economies came to the forefront of U.S. popular culture as content sites like OnlyFans.com became widely recognizable. OnlyFans received mainstream attention after sex workers popularized the platform in seeking safe alternatives for their work during a global pandemic. Sex workers built cultural capital around OnlyFans when a desire for intimate connection was widespread. However, their contributions to cultural production were

diminished. OnlyFans is a case study exemplifying the ways that sex work exists at the nexus of criminalization and desire. Sex workers navigate marginalization, poverty, precarious working conditions, and sexual desire in their work. In this chapter, I argue that contextualizing the global pandemic with longstanding sex worker struggles helps to understand how sex workers navigate their racialized, sexualized, and gendered identities in their online work.

COVID-19 and the Demand for Sex in Virtual Space

The pandemic catalyzed an urgency and fear around face-to-face, in-person intimacy. Sex practices became a heightened question of ethics as the effects of the pandemic were unrolling. To address these widespread uncertainties, in August 2020, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), and the National Coalition of STD Directors published a factsheet with guidelines for assessing risks before being sexually active. Heightened anxieties about choosing new sexual partners became a widespread public health concern, a concern that had only been previously publicly considered in queer communities. While the Internet was becoming the primary arena for social interaction, sex in virtual space was becoming an attractive option for many. Online pornography and interactive sex websites increased in popularity as the pandemic continued. (Zattoni et al 2020; Nessaibia et al 2021; Lau et al 2021)

Following the initial stay-at-home orders of 2020, social media became a public forum where sexual desires were broadcasted, and playful yearnings were made public. The Internet became a widespread public space for erotic intimacies and social venues such as dance clubs. Zoom DJ sets illustrated how virtual space transformed into comfortable arenas to explore intimate connections in ways that were not as widespread before the stay-at-home orders of March 2020. The Internet then became a portal to new ways of intimacy, and as a result, sexual

economies on digital platforms no longer kept to the pornographic corners of the web. Sexual economies freely penetrated mainstream culture as the subscription-based website, OnlyFans, became a household name. Digital sex work and virtual intimacies existed before the pandemic. These industries have a reputation of being seemingly more inviting and safer for individuals who may otherwise avoid the sex trades. The pandemic did not introduce digital sex work; however, it helped make it widespread and available to people who might have otherwise avoided the industry altogether.

Social media networks have been lucrative to the Internet since their development. However, in recent years social media networks have also functioned as leading sites for monetary gain. Instagram, for example, has evolved into a robust platform that centers on advertising goods and services. Employment opportunities, such as content creation, influencer sponsorships, and overall advertisement opportunities, have developed with the expansion and popularization of social media networks. On top of this already booming subarea of economic growth, *COVID-19* exacerbated exponential growth in social media platforms because of its function as a public space during an otherwise isolating period. The Internet became a primary site for human connection and intimacy for many.

The Internet has facilitated the growth in opportunities for sexual economies. Sex workers have historically relied on the Internet and social media networks to promote their services and to expand their businesses (Bernstein, Berg). Still, the pandemic introduced unique opportunities for sex workers to grow online businesses. Following the stay-at-home orders, the Internet became a public forum where groups could mirror in-person experiences. This was true for sexual economies as well. For example, strip club performances became common on social media sites like Instagram. Strip clubs are part of the informal economy,

and as independent contractors and not employees, dancers who work at strip clubs do not receive worker protections. Therefore, moving the strip club to the digital sphere became lucrative for dancers unable to work at the onset of the pandemic. The pandemic introduced an added dynamic where people interested in accessing sex and intimacy on the Internet faced the added difficulty of connecting with people in real life. Sexual promiscuity on the Internet became a social norm. At the same time, the convergence of sexual content and social networks has not only expanded networks for online sex work markets, but also amplified the growing surveillance on social media sites and pornography industries.

A crucial example of the rising tensions between social media platforms and sexual content is the subscription-based website OnlyFans.com. OnlyFans blurred the lines between mainstream social media and pornography consumption. In the exact historical moment, popular culture and *COVID-19* facilitated and created a complicated relationship with selling sexual content online. The pandemic brought restrictions that included closures of nightclubs, strip clubs, and other social community centers where sexual exploration and community building have opportunities for flourishment. The dangers of the pandemic and the initial 2020 stay-at-home orders in the U.S. stunted many people's abilities to interact with friends. Demon Time, a Black-American slang phrase, references the ungovernable late-night hours of the Internet during the stay-at-home orders. Demon Time became popularized as many strip club patrons longed for constructed intimacies offered at strip clubs. Therefore, livestreaming of sexually explicit activities became popularized and glorified on social media platforms like Instagram. As noted in the epigraph of this chapter, references to OnlyFans signal a playful stance on sexual liberation. However, I argue that pop icon Beyoncé's lyric demonstrates sex work's penetration into mainstream media consumption and self-curated images on social

media. This song charted at number one on the Billboard Hot 100 and made OnlyFans a recognizable brand in popular culture. Suddenly, having an OnlyFans signaled a cultural currency of deviance and difference that non-sex workers increasingly benefit from while sex workers are punished and hyper-surveilled. The pandemic has had rippling effects on sex work and has illuminated the explicit role it has had and continues to have in the formation of culture. While OnlyFans quickly became a platform for sex workers to survive during the pandemic, it also became a cultural hub for the exploration of sexualities, deviance, and surveillance.

Understanding Sex in Virtual Space

Self-captured sexually explicit images are a contentious site of feminist critique and theory. From revenge porn surfacing on the web to celebrity sex tapes, independently produced sexual content continues to impact expressions of sexuality. At the same time, the development of the Internet and digital technologies have expanded how people access and perform intimacy and sexual desire. Social media for instance, has shifted the exchange of information on digital platforms into an online network of social connection. New online social networks have resulted in robust industries such as advertising, fashion, fitness, beauty, and travel lifestyle. Online sex work industries have equally proliferated with the development of social media. Social networks facilitate spaces for individual expressions of sexuality that transcend geographical and ideological borders through the realm of virtual space. For example, pornography consumers no longer must seek content solely on pornography websites; they can access pornography and sexual content producers on social media sites that are socially acceptable, such as Twitter and Instagram. Indeed, social media has served as a lucrative

resource for sex workers to expand their following and advertise their services to patrons who may otherwise avoid pornography sites.

The selling of intimacy on the Internet has occurred since the inception of the Internet. In fact, modern technology is often advanced by ever-evolving sexual industries. Pornography is a motivating industry for technological advancements because it is estimated to be worth about 97 billion dollars globally. Many online sectors have evolved and refined due to the demand from sexual economies. But what do sexual economies look like on the Internet? According to T. Sanders's study of commercial sex in the U.K., digital commercial sex markets are organized into distinct categories (Figure 1). Sex work offered online is diverse and varies based on the online space being utilized by the sex worker. Business models on varying sites also contribute to the type of sex work that is available. For example, a site that offers webcam interfacing technologies allows sex workers to monetize in personal webcam rooms. However, content delivery platforms emphasize the selling of videos and images, rather than interactive sex. The Internet plays a large role in what forms of connection are available, and how successful a worker can be.

The digital sphere is an opportune space for workers who might want to explore sexual economies without physical contact, but it also serves to help expand businesses for full-service workers who primarily work in person. Many sites online serve as platforms to expand clientele for full-service workers. Escort directory websites, for example, are third-party websites that offer full-service workers a platform to create profiles to advertise their services. The websites can include international, national, and localized advertisements. This type of platform helps sex workers advertise by specific categories, such as BBW, Latina, Asian, etc. This type of platform helps to efficiently connect sex workers with clients to optimize earnings.

Escort directories often help direct traffic to sex workers' advertisements where potential clients can directly contact the sex worker. Client review forums serve as a space where clients share information about their experiences with purchasing services from sex workers. Forums vary in type but typically function as "review" systems. Clients rely on these forums to gain information about providers before booking time and services. Some sex workers find forums to be useful advertisement spaces, while others find them unproductive and at times harmful. For example, if a sex worker does not offer a specific type of service, such as unprotected sex, their reviews may be negatively impacted. This could ultimately lead to workers feeling forced to provide services they otherwise may not want to offer. Yet, the benefits of these forums also highlight an ability for workers to share tips and information with one another. Client forums are highly contested, controversial, and multi-dimensional. For further discussion on client forums and sex worker forums see Noël and Doorns & Velthuis.

Webcam platform sites are dedicated to the facilitation of webcam shows, they provide an interface between the webcam models and the customer. These platforms are comprised of various video rooms visitors can virtually join. The video chat rooms are generally open to the public. Models offer a variety of shows such as public, private, themed rooms, etc. Models set prices for webcam viewing and chatting and offer tip menus that dictate what the model will do based on how many tips they receive. Clients purchase tokens from the website and use them to tip webcam models. Webcam platforms are increasingly popular in Eastern Europe and Latin America. See chapter four for further discussion on webcam platforms.

Content delivery platforms, which are the topic of this chapter, are platforms that allow workers to monetize their sexual content. Workers can set their own prices and sell individually to patrons who visit their profiles. Workers can use various methods and tactics to optimize

their earnings. For example, content creators can require a tip from patrons who wish to send them a direct message. Content delivery programs pair well with social media platforms. Sex workers often utilize social media as a key component of their advertising work. Dating websites and phone apps also serve as a unique and underground form of advertising and connecting with potential clients. Dating apps, however, increasingly practice surveillance mechanisms to ban sex workers from advertising on their apps. For example, Seeking Arrangements (SA) is a widely used dating app that emphasizes connecting wealthy, successful (often older) men with young, beautiful women. However, SA's public relations approach has worked tirelessly to distinguish itself from an escort service platform, instead centering on "authentic" relationships between sugar daddies and babies. For more on the nuances of sugar daddy websites, see Upadhyay.

Individual sex worker websites are lucrative for sex workers in the virtual world. These are sites created and maintained by individual sex workers. They are used for advertising services, facilitating communications between sex workers and clients, and serving as a home base on the Internet. Sex workers utilize individual websites as a place they can direct clients. Websites can include their content creation pages, wish lists, social media accounts, and booking information. Having a personal website helps to ensure that if a sex worker's social media page, for example, is suspended or permanently deleted, clients know where to find said sex worker rather than disappearing into the Internet abyss. The importance of creating a personal website is evident in the constant surveillance of online platforms. Many sex workers have their accounts suspended and permanently deleted. Therefore, having a personal website to direct potential clients ensures clients have a contact line with providers independent of these platforms. Having a home base on the Internet assures workers that if they are kicked off

various platforms, they will not be at risk of losing contact with vital clientele. However, individual websites are expensive to create and maintain, and not all sex workers can access this lucrative option. While many sex workers are tech-savvy and self-taught digital experts, many marginalized workers lack access and resources to create digital home bases that protect them from the ramifications of shadowbanning and account suspension.

For many workers that I spoke to in this study, social media played a large role in connecting and expanding their brands. Social media platforms are a lucrative area of marketing for all businesses. Sexual economies and those participating in them rely on social media to circulate awareness of the services offered and reach larger audiences. However, social media platforms are often antagonistic to sex workers and build algorithms to flag and remove any content produced by sex workers. This not only impacts the financial livelihood of sex workers but also the physical safety of workers who are constantly excluded from the Internet and the networks of support built online.

Sex workers have historically challenged the notions of work and our relationships to labor. Sex workers force us to confront our deepest instincts of work culture. The rise of online platforms used to sell sexual content during the pandemic is a unique social phenomenon that illuminates the tensions between work and sexualities. Work is a coercive project that creates good citizens. The instilling of a work ethic makes it so that people's worth is associated with their productivity levels. In *The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*, Kathi Weeks explores the history of work ethic to argue for a comprehensive understanding of why we accept work as a prerequisite for living. The role of coercion in work is often coated by a social conditioning of wanting to be seen and understood

as a hard worker. Sex work viscerally confronts aspects of coercion across all forms of labor because we live in a society that makes work necessary to cover basic human needs.

The pandemic made this reality clear for even those outside of the sex trades and, at the same time, made the digital world an even more public declaration of human intimacy. However, the point that I want to make clear about the correlation between the rise in popularity of digital sex work is that it corresponds with the economic vulnerability many people in the U.S. feel. The pandemic only illuminated an existing fact about economic inequality and coercion in the U.S. This chapter focuses on understanding how economic disparity manifests itself for those participating in digital sexual economies. The digital sex trade has given opportunities to, in Mireille Miller-Young's words, put racialized sexualities to work during a time when economic uncertainty remains at an all-time high. The Latinas I talked to who participated in digital sexual economies shed light on how racialized disparity, and narratives about racialized sexualities, played a large role in their online interactions.

What is OnlyFans?

OnlyFans is a content delivery program, defined as a content subscription platform founded in 2016 by British tech entrepreneur Timothy Stokley. It is owned and operated by Finex International Limited; the global headquarters are located and based in London. It is a private company with 200 employees, and Amrapali "Ami" Gan is the current sitting CEO. Unlike other popular platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, this social media platform does not have a mobile application and operates exclusively as a website[11]. The platform is designed so that social media influencers and various content creators can offer exclusive content to their target audience. OnlyFans emphasizes access to "exclusivity," where

[11] Apple and Google's terms of service forbid nudity and sexually explicit content making pornography applications impossible to develop.

patrons can access their favorite creators' and online personalities' intimate lives for a price. OnlyFans is not a pornography website, although the platform does allow nudity and sexual content. However, the platform targets so-called "influencers" as its primary clientele.[12] It has done abundant public relations work to disassociate itself from pornography websites.

OnlyFans markets the product found on their platform to those purchasing exclusive content, such as personal life routines, exclusive photos, makeup tutorials, fashion inspiration, workout routines, meal plans, etc. While OnlyFans is a social media platform, it functions on a subscription basis, making content paywalled at the discretion of OnlyFans content creators. Typically, creators have a base subscription price that grants subscribers access to the creator's archive of content, past and future. When a "fan" subscribes to an OnlyFans profile, they are granted access to any content posted to the creator's profile. However, creators can also monetize content by selling content through the website's messaging feature. Creators can also receive tips from their fans. Some content creators find value in offering a "free page" and monetizing solely through private messaging and tips. "Free pages" are used for widespread advertising purposes. A free page does not require paying a subscription fee and allows fans to "follow" a creator without the commitment of paying for content. Creators utilize this tactic as a form of building connections with potential paying fans since their paywalled timelines are only visible to fans who already subscribed. The "free page" allows for a digital outreach system that otherwise does not exist on OnlyFans. Creators can use these pages to recruit more subscribers and maximize their earnings online.

OnlyFans allows for content monetization directly between creators and their fans. Creators receive an 80% payout of earnings, while OnlyFans keeps 20% of creator earnings.

[12] Influencers are social media personas with many followers who typically have made a career from monetizing their content by building large fan bases and selling products or advertising space on their pages.

Currently, OnlyFans is one of the most equitable websites to sell content on. On average, websites keep upwards of 50% of creator's earnings. This social media platform is also currently the only online platform that is inclusive of all creators, meaning that they are the only non-pornographic social platform that allows nudity and sex. OnlyFans has more than 180 million registered users and over 2 million content creators. Up to 500,000 new users are registered daily. There are over 750 content creators who have been paid out over 1 million dollars and OnlyFans has paid out over $6 billion in creator earnings total. The data on how many content creators post nudity and sexually explicit content is unclear as OnlyFans does not publicize data based on the genre of content. OnlyFans also declined an interview for this dissertation and instead provided the above figures via email. When I requested an interview with the media relations specialist, I was transparent about my interest in learning about sexually explicit content creators on the site. I offered to send them questions to review beforehand but was unsuccessful in securing the interview.

Upon logging into an OnlyFans account, the user has a timeline visible to them (see Figure 1). The timeline is curated based on which creators the user follows; their content is displayed throughout the timeline. Content creators have access to their earnings statistics and can track their monthly earnings and compare them to previous months and years. Many of the creators I interviewed shared that they set weekly, monthly, and annual goals and closely monitor their earnings on the site. To meet their goals, creators can use various tools to engage their audience and monetize their page further. To maximize their profits, for example, creators can use the messaging feature on the page that sets a specific price to view a message, also known as a pay-per-view (PPV) message. This feature allows creators to maximize their earnings potential by creating tiers of access to specialized content. For example, if a fan

subscribes to a creator's page, they are given access to the creator's timeline. However, creators can save exclusive content for PPV messages, allowing fans to pay for an even more exclusive look into the creator's life. The creators I interviewed shared that they used the PPV feature for exclusive, custom, and specialized sexual videos such as anal play, penetrative sex, and blowjob videos.

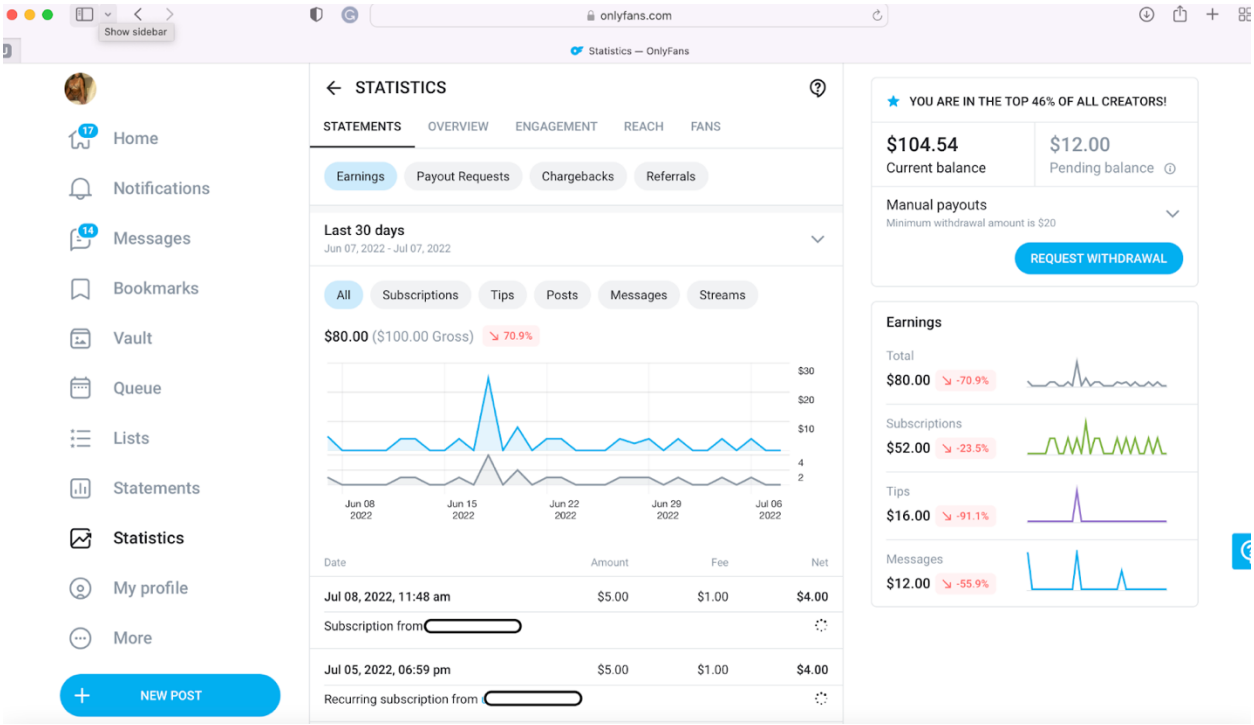

Figure 4.2: Screenshot of OnlyFans Provided by Content Creator

The OnlyFans brand emphasizes "inclusivity"; they pride themselves on being the only platform that includes all creators. Despite OnlyFans' marketing toward general social media influencers with non-sexually explicit content, the site quickly became popular amongst sex worker communities because of its inclusivity. At the height of the pandemic, sex workers found alternatives to working in person via digital sex work. Many flocked to OnlyFans to transfer their business into an online platform. The pandemic created precarious working

conditions for sex workers who work primarily in person, and many workers began transitioning their work online to address these haphazard working conditions. Because of this public shift, I started paying close attention to sites like OnlyFans and traditional webcam sites. As the platform became increasingly popularized, non-sex workers who previously did not participate in sexual economies also gravitated to this form of work. As OnlyFans began its ascension into the mainstream culture because sex workers had begun to popularize it, it became evident that people not attuned to sex work communities were now participating in discourse about online sex work and purchasing intimacy online.

Sanitizing OnlyFans: Tensions and the Reversal on the Pornography Ban

Just as OnlyFans has grown exponentially since the onset of the pandemic, it's also been publicly scrutinized by anti-sex work groups. Its ascension into the spotlight has caused a shift in its marketing strategies which have turned to sanitizing its image and attempting to distance itself from pornographic categorization. In August 2021, OnlyFans announced a ban on sexual content on their website, stating, "In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of our platform, and continue to host an inclusive community of creators and fans, we must evolve our content guidelines." (Bloomberg, 2021) This announcement followed an announcement by VISA and MasterCard declaring that they would no longer do business with the pornography website Pornhub. Online political uncertainty regarding sex and sexual content has been a looming topic of debate for some time. As noted earlier in this dissertation, the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act and the Stop Enabling Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA/SESTA) catalyzed online surveillance mechanisms that put sex workers at high risk of losing income streams. FOSTA/SESTA made online platforms liable for what was being posted on their sites, meaning

that if someone on Pornhub submitted a video of an illegal sex act, Pornhub could be prosecuted for allowing it to be published on their website.

FOSTA/SESTA was birthed from anti-pornography discourses that collapse consensual sex work with human trafficking and child pornography, and these policies create unsafe working conditions for sex workers. Online platforms that allow sexual content on their websites are increasingly liable for sexual content posted on their sites. While social media platforms such as Tumblr, Facebook, and Instagram have opted to ban sexually explicit content altogether from their platforms, platforms such as OnlyFans have taken the route of content moderation and implementing terms of service procedures that create further barriers for sex workers in the name of "safety". Since the implementation of FOSTA/SESTA, sexually explicit content online has been heavily monitored and removed from the digital sphere, even if consensually posted online for profit or pleasure. I do not wish to excuse OnlyFans' desire to disassociate itself from sex work. However, I understand the need to analyze how OnlyFans' decision to continue allowing sex on their website (a decision that sex workers fought hard for) makes them vulnerable to attacks by anti-pornography groups. I do not think it suffices to be critical of OnlyFans without also being critical of the laws that have essentially removed the rights of people who want to monetize sexual content on the Internet. I think the larger question that should be interrogated is why policymakers want to limit the monetization of sexuality and why are ideologies of protection always leveraged to accomplish this feat. Sexuality has historically been policed and tightly monitored. The digital era has created intense opposing camps that bring forth questions about whether pornography should be readily available in the so-called "public" arena of the online world.

OnlyFans runs a high risk of being targeted by moral campaigns against pornography and sex work in general. As noted above, OnlyFans is not a pornography site, but part of its mainstream appeal is the taboos that the cultural work of sex workers has ascribed to the site. OnlyFans is by no means in the same category as a pornography site, yet it holds a particular allure of sexuality that is recognized in popular culture. It also denotes a particular stance on sexual liberation. The contradiction and irony in their stance are that OnlyFans' popularization is largely credited to the social capital sex workers ascribed to the website. Sex workers' labor on the site ignited various conversations about OnlyFans that reached mainstream media. Having an OnlyFans content creator account becomes synonymous with being "daring" and "trendy." The entering of OnlyFans into the mainstream conversation popularized the brand with increasing levels of traffic to the site. The taboo nature of OnlyFans functioned as a playful signal of deviance that even the most vanilla person could flirt with, never actually associating themselves with sexual economies. Arguably so, influencers and celebrities seldom turned to OnlyFans as a potential income source until sex workers elevated the brand by participating on the site. In early 2020, OnlyFans became a recognizable website that gestured toward sexual content and as a result, many celebrities opened accounts and started to sell subscriptions to exclusive, non-sexual content.

Various social platforms function through a subscription model, allowing creators to monetize their content. What makes OnlyFans unique is its policies which allow sexually explicit and pornographic content to be purchased on its site. The choice for creators who sell non-sexual content to migrate to OnlyFans is a confusing one because various sites such as Patreon give creators the ability to monetize their content and set a subscription fee. However, Patreon does not allow sexually explicit content on its platform. Therefore, sex workers are

barred from using it to sell sexual content. Patreon is an important example that is relevant to OnlyFans and its trajectory as a successful brand. Patreon was founded in 2013 by Jack Conte and Sam Yam. It is a subscription-style payment model where fans pay their favorite creators a monthly amount–set by the creator–in exchange for exclusive content. When Patreon was founded, the platform allowed for sexually explicit content. However, amid pressures from banking institutions who threatened to stop doing business with the platform, Patreon banned sexual content in 2017. This decision caused outrage in sex worker communities, who felt betrayed by the platform they had a large part in establishing and legitimizing as a well-known brand. Discrimination against sex workers impacts the ability to make money and to live a life with security. Housing and banking discrimination are common issues that sex workers navigate. The contradiction here again is that sex workers play a large role in legitimizing digital platforms which helps them to create platforms with high traffic, yet once the platform is established, it works to sanitize its image from sex work. Influencers directly contribute to the damaging trend of kicking sex workers off by flocking to platforms like OnlyFans, benefitting from the cultural capital sex workers created only to be left to fend for themselves.

OnlyFans and Bella Thorne

One of the most controversial instances of celebrities participating on OnlyFans was Bella Thorne's decision to open an account in 2020. Bella Thorne is a former Disney child actor who has developed a celebrity following that she has been able to retain on OnlyFans. With OnlyFans circulating in popular culture and media, many celebrities such as Cardi B, Tyga, and Bella Thorne opened accounts in hopes of monetizing content. I want to emphasize again that Patreon, among other platforms with similar models, is the ideal platform for users who want to sell non-sexual content. Nevertheless, Bella Thorne made $1 Million dollars on

the first day of opening her OnlyFans account and another $1 million by the end of the week. Many celebrities, such as Cardi B, announced, with precision and clarity, that they would not be posting nudity or sexual content on their pages. Many celebrities took the position of sanitizing their own images of sex work and pornography while also benefitting from the allure that sex work ascribed to OnlyFans.

Bella Thorne announced her migration to OnlyFans through the invocation of erotic teasing. Her announcement video emphasizes a strip tease performance, where her sexuality is centered, leaving viewers to imagine and desire more. Bella Thorne playfully signals her willingness to post nudity through her invitation and announcement of joining the OnlyFans platform. Thorne then went on to scam her subscribers by selling an assumed nude photo on her OnlyFans for 200 dollars. After purchasing the image, subscribers quickly realized that Thorne sold a clothed photo. Thorne's actions ultimately impacted sex workers on the platform. Following this incident, many of her subscribers demanded refunds and even called their banks to request a reversal of the charges on their accounts. Shortly after, OnlyFans announced changes and limitations imposed on creators. For example, OnlyFans changed their payout policies, making content creators wait 30 days instead of 7 days. OnlyFans also limited the dollar amount of tips creators can receive. Thorne's seemingly playful invocation of sex workers' labor ultimately fucked over an entire community of creators who have very little options of where they can move to for work in virtual space.

The popularization of OnlyFans has reintroduced contentious dialogues about empowerment in sex work. Empowerment often serves as a reactionary response to anti-sex work discourses. However, this view is problematic and echoes the long history of liberal feminist views on sexuality as a site of empowerment with no nuance of power dynamics.

OnlyFans does not function as a liberatory platform, its popularization coincides with economic instability and growth in economic disparity, especially for marginalized groups like Latinas. However, OnlyFans' brand increasingly benefits from narratives of empowerment. There is an interesting tension that exists because when OnlyFans became increasingly popular, content creators and influencers flocked to OnlyFans to expand their online earnings. The dangerous contradiction here is that sex workers build the OnlyFans brand, made it relevant to people's lives, and increased traffic to the website. It became so popular because of sex workers that now non-sex workers wanted to use the site to expand their earning potential. In other words, there is a certain cultural currency associated with having OnlyFans that idealistically is understood as positive and empowering. Playfully gesturing toward having an OnlyFans account is "progressive," but actual sex workers do not reap the benefit of this constructed allure and are actively harmed by it. OnlyFans, up until this point, has needed sex workers to maximize their earnings since their website did not receive mainstream traffic before 2020. However, now that the site is so populous and non-sex workers use it, OnlyFans can cut the workers who made their brand relevant.

Yet, OnlyFans faces scrutiny in similar ways to pornography sites and runs the risk of experiencing banking discrimination. In 2020, VISA, MasterCard, and Discover took the moral stance of refusing to do business with online pornography company Pornhub following Nicholas Kristof's op-ed in the *New York Times* titled "The Children of Pornhub." This op-ed asserted that child pornography and trafficking were imminent on Pornhub and that the online world of pornography allowed for the broadcasting of rape. The op-ed ignited a series of attacks on consensual sex work by focusing on the perceived threat to children that Pornhub seemingly

symbolizes. Tech companies are entangled in morality narratives and often outright ban sexual content, seemingly as a mode of protection and self-preservation.

Methodology

The interview data in this chapter is part of a study on how Latinas navigate their race, ethnicity, and gender on subscription websites. The study was on individuals who identify as women and are of Latinx background. The study aimed to understand how Latinas use platforms to make their cultural and racial identities play in this process. The interviews were conducted between May 2020 and July 2021. These interviews were conducted during the *COVID-19* pandemic. When I began this study in 2018, my sole understanding and interest in online sex work was webcam modeling. This chapter developed quickly as various platforms and technologies advanced. Sex workers play a lucrative role in advancing technology and online platforms' capabilities because online pornography is a multibillion-dollar industry. Individual content creation was not a widespread phenomenon before 2020, and instead, individual content selling was siloed into specific pornography websites. Performers deeply involved in the pornography industry were likelier to participate in personal content monetization, especially since one must have a large following to be successful in content creation. However, the 2020 pandemic shifted how we understand content creators and expanded how people engage with purchasing sexual content online. It became a regular occurrence to witness discussions about OnlyFans on social media websites like Instagram and Twitter and in popular culture references such as popular music by Meghan Thee Stallion and Beyoncé.

Just as the online sex work industry rapidly shifted, my approach to studying online sex work followed suit. While observing how Latinas navigated their sexual identities on social

media platforms, I noted that sex workers were flocking to the popular site OnlyFans. As I scrolled social media sites like Twitter, I noticed many creators used the social media platform to discuss the platform—often defending it and complicating others' understanding of the complexities of labor behind content creation. I also noted that many content creators used sites like Twitter to expand their brands. They interacted with "fans" and gave sneak peeks to potential subscribers. Once I gathered enough information about the relevancy of the platform, I visited OnlyFans and created a profile to communicate with content creators. I familiarized myself with how the site works and how to search for content creators. I searched for creators who used identifying markers such as hashtags like #Latina. At first, I used OnlyFans as my primary way of contacting creators.

I began by following various creators' accounts and sending them a "tip" of five dollars USD and an outreach message. OnlyFans allows creators to require tips as a prerequisite for being direct messaged. Many creators do not allow "fans" to message them without sending a "tip." In my initial message, I introduced myself and my institutional affiliations. I gave them information about my study and my email address to contact me if they were interested in scheduling an interview. I found this initial strategy to be highly ineffective for several reasons. First, many creators did not respond to my message or declined an interview. This became increasingly expensive since I had to send money to contact them. The introductory "tip" was an added expense apart from the forty dollars I offered for the interview. Second, recruiting from OnlyFans felt unethical because creators were not consenting to be observed by a researcher while working. I pivoted away from recruiting participants on OnlyFans and instead reached out to creators on their public social media sites.

Recruitment procedures

Upon receiving approval from the university's institutional review board, I began using social media platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, and Instagram to search for potential participants. Initially I relied on social media to connect with content creators and searched hashtags such as "Latina" to follow content creators who identified with this hashtag. I conceptualized these social media platforms as networking strategies and immersed myself in sex worker communities on various platforms. I followed and interacted with various sex worker profiles and befriended sex workers online. I connected with sex workers who were "retweeted" onto my timeline. If they had emails connected to their accounts, I would send them a recruitment email, introducing myself and the content of my study. In my recruitment email, I included information about compensation for the interview, offering forty USD for a one-hour interview. This method of recruitment was not as successful as I would have liked. Therefore, I began direct messaging potential participants on Twitter, Reddit, and Instagram. I again was not securing as many participants as I would have liked, so I began subscribing to content creators' OnlyFans pages to reach them directly in their messages. Many content creators do not acknowledge their direct messages on social media platforms and instead direct people to message them on OnlyFans. This strategy allows content creators to monetize access to their attention which helps them to maximize their earnings. If a content creator did not want to participate in the interview, I would not look at their page or use any of their information in this study. I was able to interview a few people by contacting them via OnlyFans messages. However, this method became unsustainable because aside from paying the subscription, I also had to send a "tip" to message creators. This quickly became very expensive and did not guarantee that the creators I contacted would agree to participate.

With limited funding, I created a recruitment flyer that I could circulate on social media platforms Twitter, Instagram, and Reddit. In the call, I used "Latina content creator" as the language rather than "sex worker." I made this decision because "sex worker" is a complex identity that some people do not identify with, especially those that exclusively work online. Leaving the language broad would cast a larger net of potential participants. I regret this decision because when I put the call out, I received many interest emails from people who misunderstood the call. They took "content creator" as an influencer or artist, and many of those who contacted me did not sell sexual content. The call also attracted creators who create sexual content very passively rather than as a full-time job.

Figure 4.3: Screenshot of a Tweet from author's personal Twitter account

Participants

I secured 20 interviews with Latinas who create sexual content to sell online. The Latinas I spoke to in this study ranged from ages 24-35. 95% of them were in the United States, while 5% were living in a different country. 30% of the participants created content full-time

while 70% viewed content creation as a "gig" and did not prioritize growing their online brand and presence. The creators in this study made between 200 dollars and 10,000 dollars per month selling content. All participants received the interview questions before scheduling an interview. All interviews were conducted via phone or video call. I recorded and transcribed all interviews with content creators. They chose aliases or to be referred to by their stage name. The following sections describe the various themes that came up during the interviews.

Hiding Behind Protection: Tensions Between Social Media Platforms and Sexual Content

The Internet offers robust forms of expanding marketing and business opportunities for sex workers. However, many tensions arise from making oneself visible in the digital sphere. Many full-service workers have voiced their reasonings for avoiding digital work. For example, digital work requires a consistent online presence and more work hours. For social media engagement, messaging, marketing, and filming content, a schedule and time commitment are necessary to be successful, especially given the nature of the saturated digital sex work market. For full-service in-person workers, the increased labor can be unappealing, especially if there is no guarantee of financial success. Aside from the additional work required for a successful online career, there are various perceived dangers in having an online presence as a sex worker. These dangers are often framed as impacting those who are not working in the industry and instead position those who are working as threats to public safety.

Ideological arguments against sex work typically focus on narratives of protecting children and protecting women and girls. The Internet is an important example of how narratives of safety and protection work to exclude sex workers from accessing various platforms under the guise of protecting "vulnerable" populations. Safety is a large factor in the

way that the Internet is structured. Content moderation, which is the process of screening and monitoring user-generated content online, is implemented to provide a "safe environment" on the Internet. However, protection functions as a central ideological force that protects the interests of the elite. As I outlined in chapter one, historically speaking, protection has been invoked to promote and prioritize the safety of affluent white people and their assets, often at the expense of people of color. On the Internet, the safety of brands and platforms is often prioritized over users' well-being. Protection is a crucial site of exploration in the digital sphere in general, however, analyzing protection in relation to sex work and the digital sphere is crucial in understanding the criminalization of sexuality. In chapter one, I outlined how sex work as a labor category threatens the system of capitalism and is consequently hyper-policed. The Internet is a crucial site that illuminates how narratives of protection are invoked to discipline sex worker communities and do not prioritize the protection of workers. Privacy policies are set in place to protect the interests of platforms, especially with the repealing of Section 230. However, the so-called protections being implemented leave workers vulnerable to doxing and harassment.

Many platform terms of service agreements are informed by ideologies of protection. To use the Internet, codes of ethics must be followed, or your account could be banned permanently. Bans on sexuality are not new and are implemented in wide-ranging ways. For example, the recent repeal of Roe V. Wade and the looming threat to LGBTQ rights are concrete examples of how narratives of protection arm the State against marginalized communities. Online platforms practice several exclusionary tactics against sexuality and sexually explicit content. However, I am interested in exploring how online platforms, and the Internet, are influenced by larger narratives of protection. Legally speaking, online platforms

are liable for content posted on their sites due to the repealing of Section 230. At the same time, sexuality, and gender itself are increasingly categorized as a danger to our society according to policymakers. These facts bring forth a unique tension on the Internet. While sexual content such as pornography is a highly profitable industry, the law plays an extensive role in dictating whether a platform can be prosecuted for the content they allow. It is worth noting that online platforms and tech companies notoriously avoid interviews and require employees to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs). Therefore, my theorization on the relationship between the law and how platforms navigate the law is speculative. Still, Terms of Service Agreements have become increasingly clear about the intolerance of sexually explicit content on various platforms, while platforms like OnlyFans profit from sexual content while simultaneously ignoring the damaging impacts to workers. Since this chapter focuses on OnlyFans.com, it is crucial to understand the relationship between social media platforms and sexual content because sexual economies on the Internet rely on social networks to grow and expand clientele. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram play large roles in how content creators distribute content across the Internet.

Making the Internet a public workplace space has its own forms of danger attached. Social media has been a venue for social connection since the introduction of Myspace, where images and text are attached to profiles that belong to real people updating details of their lives. Social media is a social world connected to users' real-life experiences. For those involved in sexual economies, the Internet's social world has higher stakes in identity exposure. If the Internet is a social sphere, then where does that leave workers involved in sexual economies? As noted at the beginning of this dissertation, sex workers occupy time and space as enemies of the State and are positioned by society as morally bankrupt. Many sex workers do not

disclose their participation in sexual economies because it puts them at risk for targeted violence. However, the public nature of the Internet creates new forms of the danger of exposure to targeted violence. These dangers are not seriously considered by tech companies and platforms. Instead, “safety” and “protection” are ideological facades that target the safety of sex workers.

Protection and Privacy Breaches

Doxing is a common threat to workers online. However, platforms like OnlyFans and other social media platforms do the bare minimum to protect workers' privacy and the privacy of general users. For example, Baby Lupez, an Indigenous genderqueer content creator based in a metropolitan city in California, experienced harassment from patrons online. Following our initial interview in 2021, Baby Lupez reached out for support in handling online harassment. They shared that someone had been stalking them, screen-recording their explicit content on OnlyFans, and sending it to the person they were dating. Baby Lupez shared that they were worried that the person harassing them would contact their university and feared they’d be expelled. OnlyFans Terms of Service details that it is illegal for “fans” to screen record content. All content posted on OnlyFans belongs to creators. However, OnlyFans does not invest in programs that would block users’ abilities to screen capture. Lupez shared their frustration, stating, “It’s bullshit that OnlyFans doesn’t just block screen-recording. If Netflix can block screenshots, then they can do it too” (Personal Interview, June 2021). Baby Lupez expressed their frustrations with OnlyFans' lack of urgency in addressing the harassment they received. Instead of prioritizing a structural solution to privacy concerns by banning screen recording across the platform, OnlyFans gives all the privacy responsibilities to individual

creators. OnlyFans in only seemingly interested in "protecting" its interests with no tangible investments in protecting the identities and privacy of workers.

Users' privacy concerns are seldom taken seriously by tech companies. Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram do not work with urgency when addressing fraud issues on their platforms unless the accusations are connected to sexually explicit content. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, repealing Section 230 made websites and platforms liable for content on their sites. However, because the law targets sexual content, websites, and platforms are less likely to address core issues that put users at risk. For example, a common issue with the people I interviewed was fraudulent pages. Lord Hefner, a widely known Black Latina pornography performer based in the United States, publicly shared her frustration with Instagram on Twitter. Hefner's photos were stolen to scam subscribers into buying stolen content. When Hefner reported the page to Instagram and Twitter, they did not address the issue and allowed the fraudulent page to remain active. Lord Hefner has had to find ways to combat stolen content and identity issues by watermarking her images. Still, this individual attempt to address the structural negligence of social media platforms as it pertains to sex workers speaks volumes about what and who is actually being protected.

Veronica Santos, a content creator based in a metropolitan city in the Midwest region of the United States, shared her difficulties with compartmentalizing her sex worker persona and personal social media accounts. Creators are tasked with mitigating privacy breaches for their safety and well-being. For Santos, finding ways to exist online strategically were crucial for the success of her online business selling sexual content.

> I don't have a personal social media account. I used to, but it got too messy. I had a personal Facebook that I used to connect with family and friends, but when I started

> doing porn, people from the town where my dad is from in Mexico found my porn, and they started tagging my family and people who knew me in real life on posts where I was performing. After that I ended up deleting all my personal social media and only use social media for work now. I don't have a Facebook, and I use Instagram and Twitter as Veronica Santos only (Personal Interview, May 2020).

For Santos, her primary concern was being forced out to her family. She pivoted her use of social media to mitigate any blending of her work life with her personal life. Santos' account of being doxed is a common occurrence for workers who utilize the Internet to sell sexual content. The risks involved in online sex work illuminate the unique tension of virtual space. Social networks, now more than ever, are increasingly connected to sexual economies online, and content creators are having to change their personal approaches to using social media.

Building a Social Media Brand

OnlyFans is not a social media platform in the way that Twitter and Instagram are, for example. However, arguably so, OnlyFans is built on the premise that content creators have built large followings on other social media platforms that can intuitively migrate to OnlyFans. This model is beneficial for established content creators, and established sex workers who use social media platforms for advertising. Sex workers across various sexual economies rely on platforms on the Internet to build their businesses. The Internet is a tool that can expand marketing and clientele for various workers involved in sexual economies. Marketing is an important aspect of not only digital sex work but also other forms of work such as full-service sex work. However, the criminalization of sex work through various policies has impacted how sex workers navigate the Internet. OnlyFans is a fascinating example of how sexual content in the mainstream is consistently viewed as a danger to the Internet's public space. In chapter

one, I outlined how FOSTA/SESTA positions consensual online sex work as sex trafficking, but also, I analyzed how the law positions all sexual commerce as sex trafficking precisely because, through the logic of the law, sex is always owned by the State. I want to bring forth the tension found in how Latina content creators on OnlyFans are constantly negotiating to grow their brands and navigating the anti-sex work policies that position their work and their bodies on the Internet as trespass and a direct danger to others.

Shadowbanning and account suspension commonly target women of color and sex workers of color. This is particularly alarming given that many sex workers rely on social media to advertise their services and to make a living. For instance, Baby Lupez shared the creative ways they navigate social media to expand the exposure their OnlyFans page receives. Baby Lupez explained that they relied heavily on localized dating apps targeted toward Latinx groups. By reaching a large pool of potential clients in the Southern California region, they increased their monthly subscribers and connected with people interested in collaborating and filming content. However, Lupez explained that they had previously been banned from other mainstream dating apps and could no longer use them for personal pleasure.

Similarly, Andrea K, a Dominican content creator based in a metropolitan city in Spain, explained that she used dating apps to advertise her content and relied on them to meet potential lovers. “I didn’t really know that my account could be banned for posting my OnlyFans link, but I was banned. And I am actually really sad about it because I used it to meet people mostly, but now I can’t have an account” (Personal Interview, June 2021). Dating apps have notoriously discriminated against Black women and other women of color. Algorithmic biases reflect historical ideas about women of color’s bodies as inherently inappropriate and dangerous to others. The added layer of sex workers of color using these apps for personal

pleasure and business advertisements makes them more susceptible to bans from these platforms.

Social media also has a contentious relationship with sex worker communities and communities of color. Shadowbanning is an ambiguous tactic platform engineers utilize that impacts algorithms that ultimately hide and marginalize specific people's content. Shadowbanning not only hides people's content on social media feeds but also hides entire profiles. For example, if a social media user is shadowbanned, their profile will not be visible, even when typing their username into a search box. Users are not made aware if their accounts are shadowbanned. Users who have been shadowbanned may notice less interaction with their content, such as fewer likes, fewer comments, and, overall, less engagement. It is unclear how platforms decide whose profiles and content get shadowbanned. However, sexually explicit content or content interpreted as hypersexual, such as women of color's bodies, is often flagged as inappropriate and a violation of community guidelines. Engagement on social media correlates to the overall success of sex workers.

> …"the currency of social networks is attention." While there may be some truth in this statement, for sex workers, the currency of social networks is also, well, *currency*. Accessing community and clients translates to income for people like us who are marginalized, stigmatized, and criminalized. So, when sex workers lose access to social media, we lose access to income. Shadowbanning, then, is an opaque practice that effectively denies sex workers their livelihood. (Fitzgerald & Sage, 2019).

The implications of shadowbanning are far-reaching. For Veronica Santos, social media played a large role in her ability to leave the pornography industry and work from home, creating content on OnlyFans. She shared that her decision to shift into content creation full-time gave

her more autonomy over her body because past experiences made her uncomfortable working in person. However, Santos also shared that she struggled with shadowbanning and often felt her Instagram account was at risk of being permanently banned.

> I am really popular, and I have a big following because I used to do porn before, and sometimes it doesn't seem worth posting my link or pictures that might get me banned. I would rather rebrand my social media and try to grow my other businesses on there" (Personal Interview, May 2020).

Santos viewed her social media presence as a businesswoman who had to decide which services were worth advertising in the long run. She has since focused her Instagram as a skincare professional and clothing brand CEO.

For other creators, sexual content is the best option for financial autonomy and economic success and therefore strategies for avoiding shadowbanning and account suspension are required for survival. Lord Hefner struggles with account suspension on Instagram and Twitter. She relies heavily on these social media platforms to direct clients to her OnlyFans page and to share clips of content that can be purchased on her OnlyFans profile. Lord Hefner has spent significant time and energy growing her brand and increasing her followers. However, this work is constantly disrupted by platforms that have suspended her account on numerous occasions. Hefner has navigated this setback by creating a personal website where potential clients can always find her. She has also watermarked all of her images with her name so that even if her photo is reposted online, potential clients can find her by searching her name in any search engine, such as Google, and would be directed to her personal website.

The tensions between social media and sexual content directly impact content creators who are looking to grow their brand and facilitate business transactions over the internet.

However, as noted above, many content creators have learned to navigate the surveillance mechanisms imposed by tech companies. However, social media is a large portion of digital sex work, the actual platforms, such as OnlyFans.com, where workers sell content, also introduce unique issues for creators. Sex workers are at the forefront of addressing the ambiguous nature of tech companies and are consistently questioning internal procedures within large tech companies that organize our virtual social worlds. Still, sex worker communities work tirelessly to create inclusive online spaces where their content is not at risk of being marginalized. Lips Social is one of those spaces. It is a social network where sexual expression is welcome. Founder Annie Brown emphasizes the importance of building online spaces for marginalized voices on the Internet (Lovine, 2021). The artwork in Figure 1 exemplifies the tensions between online marginalized voices and celebrity pages that have the flexibility and freedom to post sexually explicit and sexually suggestive content without fear of being de-platformed.

Using Hashtags to Advertise a Product

As noted above, social media platforms operate through various algorithms that position content as more accessible or visible than others. Algorithms remain contentious amongst sex worker activists because of the inherent bias and discrimination against sex working communities. This bias stems from the passing of FOSTA/SESTA which repealed Section 230 making online platforms liable for content that is posted on their websites. Therefore, companies such as Tumblr, Twitter, and Instagram made the executive decision to ban sexual content from their platforms. Content moderation has a human element, where various digital platforms have entire security teams that moderate content on their sites. FOSTA/SESTA initiated a high surveillance style approach to the use of the internet that

ultimately worked to further marginalize and make vulnerable entire populations of people who relied on the internet to make a living. The issue with algorithmic bias is that often racialized people are more vulnerable to being perceived as inherently suspect, overtly sexual, and dangerous while simply existing. Studies have also indicated that algorithmic biases target non-white groups, regardless of their affiliation with the sex trades. Algorithms exhibit racism, ageist, fatphobic, and classist tendencies that are reflected in how content is accessed on various platforms. Content creators, regardless of the topic of their content, are disadvantaged in the digital marketplace if they are too fat, too poor, too Black, or perceived as too sexual. Hashtags become a very complex tool to navigate these algorithmic biases and to help creators organize their content in a way that makes it easy to find.

Advertising #Latina

"Latina" as an identity category is a highly contested identity marker. In general, terms of identity are complicated, sticky, albeit annoying, for people of Mexican, Central American, Caribbean, and Latin American descent. These facts become increasingly more complicated when one considers that pornography is organized and archived by categorical differences on adult entertainment websites. Porn's catalog is organized through the division of categories based on race, various fantasies and kinks, and sexuality, to name a few. Race, or perceived racialization, is an important categorical distinction on porn sites that not only help consumers of pornography locate the genre of sexual performers and overall porn they are interested in, but also allows performers to indicate to algorithms using hashtags where their videos should be cataloged to gain the highest number of views as possible. Performers can actively assign hashtags to their videos that place them within the same catalog as others using the same hashtag. Therefore, the invocation of a hashtag by a performer is a strategic marketing strategy

that allows them to advantageously position themselves within a potentially valuable category. My exploration of the Latina hashtag on online forums and websites gives insight into complicated questions of how the people in my study chose to invoke the hashtag, how they felt about categorizing themselves as Latina, and any perceived benefits to this self-categorization. While some of the performers I spoke with did not identify with the label "Latina", many of them did express profound understandings of their hesitation with the categorization and the image of The Latina Body that they refused to invoke in their work.

Baby Lupez, an online sex worker of Oaxacan descent, shared their hesitations with invoking the Latina hashtag in their work. For them, "Latina" was a homogenizing term that didn't capture their self-identification.

> I don't use 'Latina'. I identify as Oaxacan and I don't feel comfortable using 'Latina' in my work. I don't know what 'Latina' means and I actually have a big issue with it because of the anti-Black and anti-Indigenous histories with it. And also, I don't really identify with being a woman. And I actually feel like if I use it I am kind of like falsely advertising (laughs). When I think of a 'Latina' I think of a light-skinned curvy in all the right places woman, and I don't feel that way. So if I use a 'Latina' hashtag I feel like people are going to be like 'she doesn't look like the type of Latina I want'. (Personal Interview, July 2021)

Baby Lupez understood the contentious histories associated with 'Latina/o' as an identity category. Still, though, Baby Lupez understood that the hashtag possessed a currency they could not access. They, a Brown Oaxacan sex worker, feel excluded from a supposedly all-encompassing category of identity. However, as I skimmed through the Latina hashtag on various platforms, I realized that many non-Latina sex workers invoke the "Latina" hashtag.

While their motivations are unclear, it is evident that in the online pornography world, "Latina" holds a specific sexual appeal and desire. But the sex appeal and desire ascribed to Latinas is taken on even outside of pornography contexts. For example, in July 2022, Polish *Below Deck* reality star Magda Ziomek went viral on Twitter for claiming to be Latina. In the short viral video, Ziomek reflects in a confessional-style interview with producers on her flirtatious encounter with a co-star despite being in a relationship during filming. Ziomek playfully excuses her actions by stating, "I like to dance. I feel hot. I'm Latina so I just wanna have fun!" The off-camera producer follows up with, "Are you Latina?" to which Ziomek responds. "No, just inside. Like deep inside I feel more Latino than…Polish" (Karruli, 2022). Ziomek expresses a playful longing to be perceived as fun and to feel "hot". For Ziomek, that also means taking on a Latina identity. I am not necessarily interested in exploring her motivations for associating sexuality and desire to feel "hot" with Latinas as much as I am interested in exploring why she is authorizing herself to identify as Latina, as a Polish, thin, fair-skinned, blonde woman, Ziomek feels able to identify with Latina more than Baby Lupez. Ziomek can fluidly move through categories of identity that have historically excluded Indigenous and Black Latinx communities. She reaps the benefits of viewing herself as "fun" and "sexy" despite not being faced with the violence and surveillance that Indigenous, Black, and Brown Latinx communities face simply for existing.

In the context of Baby Lupez's online work, they felt a mistrust of the category 'Latina' and expressed concerns that using the hashtag or self-categorization would be a false statement and a form of false advertisement. In Baby Lupez's context, "Latina" is a wounding category that ultimately isolates those that do not fit into the image of The Latina Body. In the end, maybe this association with desires for Latinas is not appealing to performers who do not find

meaning or value in the term. Yet, it is worth noting that the identity category draws appeal, even to those with no lineage in Latin America, and in Lupez's case, draws no appeal to those from Latinx backgrounds.

Yet, some performers shared complicated relationships to their own understanding of using "Latina" in their online work. Solita, a 26-year-old content creator based in Southern California, shared her experiences navigating content delivery platforms as a Latina. She shared various strategies she used to distinguish herself as Latina because her clientele sought her out for her distinguishable Latina characteristics, such as long dark hair, olive skin, and a small but curvaceous physique. For example, she used red lipstick to signal her identity, used Spanish language music in her videos, and used Spanish words when addressing clients. After categorizing herself in this hashtag she began receiving very specific requests, some of which made her uncomfortable.

> I had people asking me for all kinds of things. A lot of the people who bought content from me were white men and they'd ask for weird scenarios. One guy asked me if we could role play like he was border patrol, and I was crossing the border. I didn't feel comfortable doing that, so I said no (Personal Interview, July 2021)

Solita established firm boundaries around what she was willing to perform for her subscribers. Although she understood the perceived value of identifying and performing "Latina" phenotypic markers for her subscribers, she expressed boundaries she created for herself that made her feel more comfortable doing so. As Solita shared her experiences with me she understood how damaging online work could be and advocated for various healing approaches to selling content. For example, Solita explained that when she began selling content, she was

experiencing a breakup from a relationship where she did not feel desirable. Online work was a contained space where she could explore feeling desired. Her construction of an image removed from her identity allowed for a complicated embodiment separate from her lived reality off the Internet. However, she tightly monitored the embodiment she presented online and created her own codes of ethics based on her personal values.

In one instance, she shared her experience with a regular client online. This client spent a lot of time on Solita's pages and was a content purchasing regular. She shared that the client's allure to her was the client's own interest in Selena, the late Tejana music star. The client loved Solita because of her physical similarities to Selena. One of the client's requests what for her to dress up as Selena and sing along to one of her popular songs. Solita playfully shared that she felt embarrassed after selling the video. "I felt so embarrassed and kept thinking, 'oh my god, Selena would so so disappointed in me for this! (laughs)'" (Personal Interview, July 2021). Solita relied on a personal code of ethics to help her determine what type of content she was willing to produce that emphasized her Latina identity. She maintained discomfort and flat-out refusal with overt racist and white supremacist relationships to her identity and content.

Building an Image and Building a Body on OnlyFans: Reimagining Monstrosity Through Sex Worker's Gender Affirming Procedures

These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression. They ask us why we have created them.–Jeffrey Cohen

Got me a new body, now I need some new dick…old ***** hit me and I said 'new body, who this'?--Nicki Minaj, *New Body*

Beginning in the sixth grade, my body conjured anxieties from family members to teachers to health care professionals who expressed concerns that I would become pregnant. My clothing was often cited as the primary concern for assumptions that I was a sexual being at the age of ten years old. It wasn't until I was much older that I realized that these authoritative figures found my body to be offensive, not my clothing. Black feminist thinkers and liberation philosophers have theorized about embodiment and how the body interfaces with power. Race, gender, and sexualities play key roles in how the body is perceived in society. Racialized bodies have historically been stripped of autonomy and authority over self-fashioning and self-adornment. And in the case of my adolescent upbringing, I soon realized that choosing to embody aesthetics that heightened my sexual appeal made me an active target for scrutiny and discipline. When I made sexualities the center of my research questions I was met with hesitation and various forms of emotional and psychological violence. This too is part of my theorization of The Latina Body. In this dissertation, I have centered on understanding the playful and joyous ways that Latina sex workers rely on sexualized embodiment to earn a living. Oftentimes, Latinas are categorized as unsophisticated, simple-minded thinkers, and their embodiment, especially if purposefully and intentionally sexual, is scrutinized. Latinas are accused of prioritizing being desired by others; self-fashioning rituals chalked up to wanting the attention of men. I want to bring forward Jeffrey Cohen's contributions to Monster Theory into my rumination on understanding the anxieties that Latinas' sexual aesthetics elicits, but more specifically, to understand the patronizing, hatred, and loathing felt toward Latinas who flirtatiously embody the desire they've been ascribed.

In 2020 I brought a draft of my chapter on Cardi B to the writing specialist on my campus to help me edit the chapter to submit for publication. It just so happened that our

meeting was the week following the J-Lo and Shakira 2020 Superbowl performance that made headlines for its overtly sexual embodiments. The writing specialist, trying to enhance my thinking and argument, said, "Latina sexualities are hypersexual in a way that isn't empowering. When Beyoncé performed during the Superbowl, it was clear she was doing it for her pleasure. J-Lo and Shakira were doing it to please others." The writing specialist's comments stayed with me even to this day. While at first, I felt angry and misunderstood; I later realized that these comments did further my thinking. These comments revealed a hole in my argument that Cohen helps me to address. Latina hypersexual sexualities from the position of pleasure and joy are severely undertheorized. In fact, Latina sexualities are constantly positioned from the stance of something done *to* them. But what if Latinas embodied a profound disruption of cultural logics with every sexy embodiment they produced? And what if they enjoyed it? What if their willingness and outright desire to be sexy is the very thing that made them illegible and threatening to others?

In chapter one, I outlined sex worker consciousness as a hybrid, cyborg consciousness that calls to question labor itself. Latinas who joyously and freely embody sexual excess are monsters who refuse categorization. They are disciplined out of embodying the desire that naturally oozes from their bodies; constantly told that if they chose to identify with it, they are not only "bad girls" but also upholding patriarchy by pandering to the male gaze. But what if Latinas are monsters that we've created? Monsters that personify a deep fear and disgust of refusing categorization.

> The monster always escapes because it refuses categorization. This refusal to participate in the classificatory 'order of things' is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts

> to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threaten to smash distinctions." (Cohen, 6, YEAR)

I posit that much of the anxiety around Latina sexualities, our refusal to engage with the excess, is a form of controlling subjects that we fear. More importantly, though, I argue that Latinas who participate in sexual economies actively conjure these fears and use them in their work.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I theorized about the creation of The Latina Body as a marketing strategy and imperialist tool that is used to penetrate Latin American countries to extract resources and expand U.S. companies. The Latina Body signals excess, availability, and sexuality that is directly tied to how free markets view Latin American resources such as coffee and bananas. The Latina Body is a valuable commodity that must be controlled and monetized from the view of the empire. It is a visual delight that is tied to the desire for economic expansion. The Latina Body playfully signals a desire for resources through a desire for racialized sexualities. Racialized sexualities index meanings of difference that are integrated in how the U.S. positions other countries in their attempts to economically dominate and extract resources. The image of The Latina Body is highly controversial and highlights an idealized version of what "Latin" women are supposed to look like. But to echo what Myra Mendible articulated in the introduction to the 2007 anthology, *From Bananas to Buttocks: The Latina Body in Popular Film and Culture,* The Latina Body as U.S. marketing companies have presented it, does not exist.

Nonetheless, The Latina Body functions as an aspiration that indexes value through the desire assigned to it. However, Latinas are very seldomly given autonomy or authority in their own desire to embody sexualized aesthetics. This section is interested in exploring the ways

that sex workers find meaning in constructing not only their online personas but also their physical bodies and appearances to either achieve the look of The Latina Body or struggle to find meaning and resonance within the category.

Desire, as noted in chapter one, is a complicated value system. And in sex work, desire functions as a mechanism to assign monetary value to specific groups. Desire is crucial to think through because it operates as an important organizer of power and status, I argue, even outside of sexual economies. Various racialized and gendered bodies index specific meanings understood as desirable and worthy of economic recognition for their desirability. However, there are instances where one can be desired, but the desire is based on a want or need to exploit. For example, capitalism desires racialized gendered labor, such as Mexican men's labor, as an immensely valuable resource to sustain industries such as agriculture. However, capitalism desires Mexican labor while also intentionally devaluing the labor. This allows for a social system that understands that certain groups may be "desired" to do the dirty work of capitalism but should not be acknowledged or compensated for that labor. The devaluation that happens here takes form in creating social meanings based on who is worthy of pay, or "skilled" in the workforce.

Similarly, desire works to position groups as most desirable in various contexts. While white women are often desired for their perceived superior value in a racist society, black women and other women of color can be desired yet not understood as valuable enough to be compensated for their desirability. Nonetheless, to be sexually desired can serve as a point of power and economic upward mobility for Black women and other women of color. Desire is created under the same white heteronormative logics that position people of color, queer people, and other marginalized people as less than human. In sexual economies, desire works

very similarly as to the way desire functions in vanilla industries. For example, in the vanilla world, if you want to access higher paying jobs, you are advised to go to school or receive vocational training that makes workers competitive in various job markets. Of course, there are various systemic barriers that make it so that low-income people, for example, do not have the same opportunities or flexibility to invest in certificates such as college degrees, or honing their skills to maximize their earnings.

Additionally, pay disparities are constantly limiting various groups' ability to build wealth compared to their white counterparts. Porn scholars have illuminated how this similarly manifests through various pay discrepancies based on race within the adult entertainment industry. Black women in pornography are paid significantly less than their white counterparts, and white women in scenes with black men are paid more for doing a scene with a black man. This practice furthers the ideological narrative that being with black men is a form of social death. Therefore, accessing the privileges of desire to maximize earnings is not an easy task. Value systems within sex work often function in relation to hegemonic understandings of beauty and so-called appropriate embodiments of femininity. “Natural femininity,” also understood as white femininity, soft features, and aesthetics that do not index any meanings of excess, are celebrated through the higher compensation for those who embody these markers of whiteness. A performer’s ability to maximize earnings is often correlated with their ability to closely relate to white, heteronormative, cisgender, able-bodied, thin beauty standards.

While beauty standards play a large role in categorizing a person’s humanity and recognizing whether they are deserving of fair pay for the desire their bodies elicit, in sex work, a Whorearchy is a framework that sex work communities have emphasized and shed light on when addressing the inequalities within the industry and perceptions of various groups of

workers. A Whorearchy positions various types of workers who participate in sexual economies as most desirable to least desirable. Desire here, again, functions as an organizing principle that follows similar logics to white heteronormativity, meaning, that white, skinny, cisgender women are viewed as both desirable and fairly compensated for the desire their bodies elicit. However, women of color for example, elicit desire while simultaneously being devalued as intimate partners. In fact, their bodies often signal a secretive desire, where they cannot be openly yearned for and are more likely to be met with resistance regarding their expected pay. Women of color in the sex trades have found ways to maximize their earnings by investing in their physical appearances, such as cosmetic procedures that range from skincare procedures and Botox to breast implants. Sex workers conceptualize their bodies as a resource that must be maintained to maximize earnings and ensure success, not unlike workers in vanilla industries who maintain themselves as competitive candidates by paying for certification programs and various industry-specific training. U.S. work culture has morphed personal identity with work identity, yet work identities are not interrogated outside of sexual economies. Important research areas within labor studies might find studies related to self-esteem and vanilla work beneficial. Sex work studies intuitively considers issues such as self-esteem and self-image because sex workers have always had a visceral understanding of how the body impacts earnings. However, I want to be clear that this issue exists outside of sexual economies. The key distinction between sex work and other areas of work is that issues of the body remain at the forefront.

Sex workers partake in constructing realities for their clients. They create experiences and personas to sell a service. Part of this process is actively constructing an image and embodiment. In discussing self-adornment rituals and processes of creating content, the people

I spoke with discussed the ritualistic components of getting ready for work. Baby Lupez shared important insight into their self-adornment procedures. When I asked them how they prepare for a day of filming content, they spoke about the joys and pleasures of performing gender.

> I love playing music and really taking my time when I am getting ready to film content. I like to smoke a joint, do my make-up, put on lingerie, and just look at myself in the mirror. For me, that's such an important part of the process. I like to feel pretty. (Personal Interview, June 2021).

For Baby Lupez, getting ready for a day of work allows for self-intimacy and appreciation of their embodiment. Lupez, an Indigenous content creator, often combats imposed narratives and ideas about being considered "ugly." Self-adornment and getting ready for work are radical moments of creating meaning and realities that are desirable and feel desirable outside white supremacist notions of beauty. This is a glimpse into the radical possibilities of constructing a self-image.

Vanity "is blamed for unleashing a cyberpsychological surge of pent-up exhibitionist desires" (Pham 2015, 222). As Pham details in her insightful article on selfies, Jean Twenge and W. Keith Campbell describe selfies and the internet as a "giant narcissism multiplied" that "normalizes "provocative and self-promoting public dress." OnlyFans sexual content creators provoke similar anxieties, not only about appropriate embodiment but also about how society values sexuality. At the same time, OnlyFans creators call into question how we feel about feminized sexualities being compensated for their coveted bodies. OnlyFans creators force an understanding that sexualities are commodities that can be harnessed and sold. Vanity is a disciplinary tactic that positions, usually feminized embodiments, into feeling shameful for sharing photos of themselves. OnlyFans creators are often disciplined for reasons around

hypersexuality and challenging how we conceptualize sexuality. Disciplining vanity or dismissing "practices of sartorial display and extravagance as mere vanity risks ignoring the lived experience of minoritized people for whom the right to be seen on their own terms and the right to take pleasure in their bodies and self-images has never been a given." (Pham, 2015, 227) OnlyFans follows a similar trajectory as other social media platforms; it serves as a site that allows for the self-curation of an image. It allows content creators to create a specific image, persona, or product and display it on their terms. Participatory media technologies such as subscription websites increase the capacity of self-representation and the revolutionary possibilities of disrupting ideologies surrounding sex and racialization.

The way that Minh-Ha T. Pham utilizes the #feministselfies tweets to understand how women reclaim space by uploading images of themselves that are often erased from the public imaginary of beauty and womanhood, social media and content creation does similar work for sex working industries who are entrenched in racism that creates value systems based on who is hirable or desirable in sex work. When OnlyFans creators can curate content that sells to niche audiences, they always disrupt and converse with mainstream understandings of what is desirable. The technology itself creates opportunities for racialized sexualities to have a platform. It is in these possibilities that I locate immense potential. Where the monster, conscious of its creation, self-constructs.

Building a Body in Sex Work

Andrea Bolívar's 2021 anthropological study on trans-Latinas' meanings and uses of money highlights an important aspect of trans-Latinas' uses of money for gender-affirming surgeries. Many of the women Bolívar spoke with expressed their uses of money earned from sex work to affirm their gender and become more valuable within the hierarchy of desire, where

trans women are often placed furthest from the top. It is too simplistic to state that these procedures operate under the guise of conforming to the male gaze or the opposite, that these procedures stem from empowerment. Instead, I posit that these procedures and gender-affirming practices highlight the various ways that Latina sex workers learn to flirt with the imposed ideas of desire that are meant to marginalize them by embodying them and making a living in an otherwise harmful economic system that depends on their exploitation. In the following chapter, I explore the ways that "building" Latinas and the racialized body in cam work creates potentials for understanding how Latinas are navigating global processes of accumulation.

Chapter Four
Why Are All the Webcam Models Colombian?
Nation, Racialized Femininity, and Sexual Economies

"These sites are basically women from different parts of the world. But there's a lot of men that get on there for the simple fact they want to like interact with uhh Colombian females on there to get that kind of like, that sexual thrive and exploration of being with Colombian women".
-El Paisa, Medellin Life, 2018 *Colombian Web Cam Girls Things To Know*

In 2015 I moved to a coastal city in California to pursue a graduate degree where the cost of living was significantly higher than I could afford on a graduate student's salary. Consequently, I began exploring part-time job opportunities that could supplement my low wages from the university. I toyed with entering a sugaring arrangement, a relationship defined by being compensated for dating[13]. I feared starting this type of in-person work without any support networks. I found my way to the Internet, which offered a seemingly safe and low-risk entry into the sex trades, where I could work from home on my terms. When I searched through the "Latina" hashtag on the adult entertainment site Chaturbate.com, it became evident that models based in Colombia dominated the Latina webcam industry on this site. They also overwhelmingly worked at webcam studio facilities, which they advertised in their bios. The shows were broadcasted globally; thus, the models curated mediated fantasies that transcended national borders. They used markers of difference, such as playing reggaetón music in the background of their shows. It became clear that "Latina" and the invocation of the hashtag operated as a categorical term that situated racialized women from Latin American countries as desirable women.

What struck me most about the oversaturated market was the demand for Colombian webcam model companions. Colombia's image in U.S. popular culture is riddled with the

[13] See Upadhyay for more information on sugaring.

legacies of cocaine lords. Yet, Colombian women are consistently at the forefront of desirable sexualities. A constructed allure for Colombian women has therefore been prevalent in U.S. culture. At the same time, I became intrigued by the intricate relationship between Colombia's national economy, often destabilized by U.S. interventions, legacies of economic instability, and overall economic and sexual desire. The more research I did on Colombia's history, the clearer it became that economic relations between Colombia and the U.S. were much more integrated than I could have imagined. I then questioned whether the booming webcam industry could correlate with Colombia and the U.S. relations?

This chapter argues that the U.S.'s trade relationship with Colombia has rendered Colombian citizens economically vulnerable through extractive trade policies. I explore how a desire for The Latina Body on webcam sites correlates with the U.S.'s desire for extractive economic relationships with countries in Latin America. While I frame trade policies as lucrative components of understanding the sex trades, this chapter argues that the market for performances of racialized gender on webcam sites results from desires for economic expansion. I analyze Latina sexualities in the webcam industry in Colombia to understand how racialized gender expressions are put to work to stabilize national economies.

Colombia is an exciting research site for scholarship on the camming industry for several reasons. First, it is home to the second-highest number of webcam models per capita, behind Romania (Franco, 2021). However, despite that high number, home and personal access to the Internet remains low in the country even as the industry proliferates. Second, the webcam studio industry in Colombia has grown substantially because models in Colombia are "working for physical camming studios where they could get access to computers with fast Internet connections" (Jones, 2020, p. 49). Therefore, a closer analysis of these studios is necessary to

understand how global camming markets exist in a dialectic with desires for expansion, accumulation, and sexual desire. This chapter draws on two years of online participant observation and virtual ethnography research from 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 on Chaturbate.com and the social media platform Instagram. Colombia is home to "around 60,000 cam models, which make up roughly 30 percent of the worldwide share", making it the second-highest webcam models per capita globally (Kussin, 2021, para. 7).

Colombia is a case study of how the Global North inflicts invasive trade policies stemming from an economic desire for expansion for capital. I analyze the desire for expansion as interchangeable with a constructed desire to consume Latina sexualities. Webcam studios in Colombia exemplify how sexual economies are intertwined with global capitalism. They generate a system whereby Latina sexualities aid in stabilizing national economies subjected to the forces of internal markets dominated by the Global North. In this chapter, I pay particular attention to the strategies invoked by webcam studios to legitimize the industry by creating a cisgender, heteronormative, anti-Black image of The Latina Body for export. In this chapter, I attempt to answer a series of questions about Colombia's growing webcam studio industry. Why are webcam models increasing in numbers throughout the country? What role do studios play in growing the webcam studio industry?

Theoretical Framing

The U.S.'s desire for resources in Latin American countries is symbolically intertwined with the desire for The Latina Body. I see The Latina Body as a manufactured product of a U.S. imperialist relationship with countries in Latin America. Desire is a helpful word for illustrating the ongoing rapacious relationship between the U.S. and Latin American countries. As it appears in the U.S., global capitalist economic expansion is at least partially masked, or

mascaraed, through a playful yearning for The Latina Body. The booming webcam industry in Colombia illuminates how these ideas manifest. I employ *desire* as an essential theoretical framework in articulating a ravenous impulse for imperialist expansion that becomes synonymous with an insatiable desire for The Latina Body. *Desire* is a critical framework that exposes a convoluted correlation between imperialist growth, political economy, and sexual desire. To understand the legacies of imperialism and their impacts on global capitalism, racial formation, sexualities, and labor, *desire* as an analytic must be invoked.

I am introducing "global mediated desire" as a framework to understand the webcam industry in Colombia. While *desire* names the complicated relationship between imperialist desire for natural resources, global mediated desire explains how processes of hypersexualization are used to justify desires for imperialist expansion and create sexual economies in the process. I define global mediated desire as a lust for transnational extractive investments from the Global North into the Global South while creating sexual economies based on constructed desire. Global mediated desire works simultaneously to extract resources. A notable example of this phenomenon is Portuguese-born Brazilian star Carmen Miranda whose iconography was used to solidify The Good Neighbor Policy. This policy positioned Latin American countries as ripe with natural resources. Miranda's image was utilized by corporations such as La United Fruit Co., now known as Chiquita Banana, to penetrate Central American countries and dominate the banana industry (Enloe, 1990; Mendible, 2007). The Latina Body is created by utilizing narratives of hypersexuality, which create new sex industries, such as the camming industry in Colombia. This historical relationship between the U.S. and Latin American countries is a lens to understand Colombia's webcam industry as a direct response to a global mediated desire for expansion.

Colombia and the U.S.

The United States—Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) was signed into law in 2011 by the Obama administration. Colombia's economy is the third largest in Central and South America, making it an economically desirable site for trade and economic investment from the Global North. The International Trade Commission (ITC) estimated that the tariff reductions from TPA would "expand exports of U.S. goods alone by more than $1.1 billion" (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2011). While U.S. economic opportunity grows, Colombia has experienced financial distress and instability. According to the 2019 Gallup World Poll, 45 percent of Colombians struggled to afford food between 2018 and 2019, and 43 percent lacked money for shelter (Massel & Reinhart, 2019). The struggles to afford necessities disproportionately affect women; 51 percent have stated their inability to afford food between 2018 and 2019. This trade agreement has resulted in Colombian people losing their businesses and a chronic scarcity of job availability.

Colombia and the U.S.'s trade history directly connects to how Colombian sexualities are constructed as desirable. While Colombian-owned products have become increasingly expensive to produce, U.S. companies have increased the marketing of U.S.-owned Colombian products, such as coffee, to U.S. consumers. At the same time, media depictions of Colombian women are constructed alongside the developing economic relations between the U.S. and Colombia. For instance, U.S. television depicts Colombian women as desirous companions who offer lighthearted comedy and sensuality. The 2009 U.S. ABC comedy series *Modern Family* exemplifies this process, where Colombian actor Sofía Vergara's character, Gloria Pritchet, embodies global mediated desire. She is married to a wealthy, older white man. Her racialized body, light skin, dark hair, and her voluptuous yet thin figure are accentuated through

the exaggeration of her accent (Casillas et al., 2018). This positioning of Colombian women as desirable companions in marriage does not exist in isolation. Colombia's cybermarriage industry has blossomed into an established industry. Felicity Amaya Schaeffer's (2013) study explores the Colombian cybermarriage industry and understands the Colombian state's goals of uplifting a global image of passion, love, and care as natural resources to be exported. The Latina Body, its creation, and consumption is also a "natural resource" Colombia can export via virtual technology.

Colombia is a webcam industry hub where international and Colombian investors employ many Colombian people. During the *COVID-19* crisis, webcam studios took over large hotels in Colombia's major cities as the travel industry halted. These hotel-turned-studios continued to employ Colombian people through the pandemic crisis (Kussin, 2021.) Colombian women are sought after for their constructed racialized and gendered appeal. The U.S.'s economic relationship with Colombia created a desire for Colombian women, and a booming webcam industry has emerged, supporting the unemployed people of Colombia. Colombia's desirous position as a free trade market created a sexualized economy based on a worldwide desire for Colombia's natural resources, including sexualities.

The Camming Industry

The Internet development in the 1990s created opportunities for sexual economies to expand in unprecedented ways. Sex workers now had access to online networks to develop their marketing strategies, their access to safety networks, and a newfound ability to grow their business substantially. The Internet also globally introduced new possibilities for intimacy and connection. Nonphysical interactive sexual economies existed before the development of the Internet in the form of phone sex, for example. Still, the introduction of the Internet expanded

the possibilities for intimate connectivity. The rising popularity of webcam shows is historically linked to Jennifer Ringley's famous JenniCam. Ringley launched her cam show in 1996 from her college dorm room, a cam that refreshed every 15 minutes. In many ways, Ringley found international success and is understood as the first camgirl who displayed the possibilities of a booming industry (Jones, 2020; Alptraum, 2018).

With higher internet speeds and new technologies, webcamming has become an interactive, robust online community. Webcam modeling is an umbrella term for selling intimacy using digital technologies, such as webcams. Webcam models offer online interactive services, including real-time video streaming, chatting, and personalized videos. The webcam industry comprises models, webcam platforms, tech companies, studio staff, technological support, translation support for models who do not speak English, and marketing teams that help create brands for studios and models alike. The webcam industry is enticing to many workers because it offers flexible and safe working conditions that allow people who would otherwise avoid the sex trades, to enter online work with a sense of security. In the online sex trade, low risk is often characterized by low risks of physical threat and sexual assault; risks far more prominent in in-person, full-service sex work[14]. Although, safety is a subjective spectrum that sex workers define by their risk assessment. For example, full-service (in-person) workers might find the risks of their images circulating the Internet much greater than the physical threats of violence and other risks they encounter in in-person work. Nonetheless, the advantages of online sex work have sparked a large wave of people entering the online sex trade.

[14] For a full list of sex work terminology see Hunt (2020).

Studies on the webcam industry have emphasized aspects of gig economy dynamics that make camming an attractive option for employment. Angela Jones's work has illuminated a relationship between exploring pleasure and destigmatizing masturbation and orgasm (Jones, 2016; Jones, 2020). Niels van Doorn and Olav Velthuis (2018) have also documented how webcam workers navigate the "hustle" of online platforms. Workers are advantageously utilizing online platforms to discuss intracommunity moral economies of tipping. Sex workers rely on underground networks to facilitate safe and equitable working conditions because they are systematically barred from workers' rights (Mac & Smith, 2018).

Webcam consumers, like pornography consumers, are overwhelmingly heterosexual men (Jones, 2020; Miller-Young, 2015). In online sex work, workers navigate algorithmic biases that favor white, thin, heterosexual models that cater to the male heterosexual consumer. Queer, trans, and women of color webcam workers are relegated to the bottom of platform catalogs (Jones, 2015). Algorithmic bias, financial discrimination, and content moderation directly impact the success of webcam workers who rely on the internet to maximize earnings. Social media websites, such as Twitter and Instagram, are lucrative for the success and safety of workers. However, sex workers have increasingly been pushed off these platforms with vague claims of violating community guidelines (Hacking//Hustling, 2020). "The ways that sex work and organizing are policed on the streets through racist, transphobic policing tactics and use of condoms as evidence parallel the inequitable ways these communities are policed online: content moderation, shadowbanning, and denial of access to financial technologies" (Blunt et al., 2020, p. 6). Algorithms actively punish people associated with the sex trades and outside white heteronormative categorical identities through account suspensions and content moderation techniques. A typical content moderation tactic is shadowbanning, which hides

users' content from general feeds. Surveillance on online platforms leads to webcam models and other online workers learning to "hack" and "hustle" platforms. Sex workers work in multiple realities where they simultaneously facilitate desires based on race and sexuality for pay while setting boundaries that work for their own needs as workers (Berg, 2021; Miller-Young, 2015).

The internet facilitates the transaction of mediated fantasies based on sexuality, race, and national origin. Pornography platforms transmit gendered and racialized performances across borders by organizing categories of content based on gender, race, and sexuality, to name a few. Chaturbate is a platform that facilitates market competition amongst models who transmit on the platform. Models make the bulk of their earnings from tips and private shows. For consumers to be able to tip, they must buy tokens from Chaturbate. After receiving tokens, models can convert them to cash. Chaturbate takes a 50% cut from these earnings. Models and studios compete for tokens, so their desirability and positioning on the site are crucial for economic success. Models and studios may embody desirous sexualities that set them apart from other models to maximize earnings. This chapter focuses on DESMADRE Studio, based in a metropolitan city in Colombia. Studios make up a large portion of revenue for webcam industries outside of the U.S. Colombia's webcam model industry is estimated to be worth about 40 million dollars (USD), with over 5,000 webcam companies that do business within Colombia (Franco, 2022; Kussin, 2022)[15]. The global camming industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry. It has grown opportunities for international and global sexual markets to thrive.

[15] This number does not reflect the cam models who work from home, not in a studio. This number also does not reflect the complicated and grey areas within the industry, where legality is constantly pushing limits. Accurate numbers of the webcam industry in Colombia are challenging to locate as many figures reported contradict each other.

Chaturbate provides opportunities for models to tag themselves using specific hashtags that organize them alongside various categories based on race, gender, and sexuality. This allows consumers to search for specific models based on gender, racial, and national markers of difference. This process facilitates the creation of desirous sexual categories, such as the Latina tag on Chaturbate, that models, studios, and consumers can utilize to fit their needs.

Creating The Latina Body

Latinidad is constructed and utilized to expand sexual markets, and "Latina" is a categorical frame implemented as a marketing strategy by models and studios. "Latina" has come to signify sexual desire for the following reasons. First, the U.S. positions Latin American countries as ripe with natural resources. Political economists and feminist scholars of Latina sexualities note that Latin America and the Caribbean incite an insatiable desire for expansion of capital intertwined with a desire for Latina sexualities. As noted above, "The Latina Body" is a product of the U.S.'s imperialist relationship with countries in Latin America (Enloe, 1990; Aparicio & Chavez-Silverman, 1997; Mendible, 2007). Beginning in the 20th century, the U.S. manufactured a narrative through policy and media that placed Latin America as a bountiful continent needing protection from foreign intervention. A critical component of accomplishing this colonial feat was the creation of "The Latina Body," defined as a carefully reproduced sign, an idea that signals excess and availability while eliciting sexual desire (Vargas, 2014; Rodriguez, 2014; Casillas et al., 2018). Latina sexualities and the sex trades in Latin American countries are entwined with economic expansion from the U.S. into countries in Latin America.

The webcam industry teaches us about the integral nature of sex workers' labor in global economies. Colombian webcam models are made into commodifiable products, and the

sex trades offer examples of how global capitalist expansions rely on constructed desires for racialized sexualities. For example, sex tourism industries work to stabilize national economies where people living in poverty can advantageously position their sexualities as profitable (Rivers-Moore, 2016). Tourism and constructed desires contribute to our understanding of how sexualities create and sustain travel industries to "exotic" countries. People from Latin American and Caribbean countries are made economically vulnerable because neoliberal policies deem their gendered labor and resources as justifiably exploitable for global accumulation. Tourism industries work to create entire economies based on a desire for access to sexualized bodies and a desire for a "tropical escape." In Costa Rica, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, sex tourism provides steady income for women who otherwise do not have access to high wages (Cabezas, 2009). Sex tourism has become integral to Caribbean countries' economic development and opportunities. The webcam industry in Colombia works similarly to cultivate a deep desire for virtual travel to consume The Latina Body. Sex tourism is a framework to theorize how virtual travelers visit and consume The Latina Body on the web.

Colombia has an extensive history of emphasizing gendered labor as a product eligible for export. For example, in Amaya Schaeffer's 2013 study on the internet marriage industry, referred to as Cybermarrige, she complicates our understanding of Cybermarriage as a one-dimensional intimate investment between economically dominant individuals from the Global North and subordinated individuals from the Global South. Schaeffer's framework outlines how U.S. men's fantasies about Latin American women as wives, like Sofia Vergara's character in *Modern Family,* are constantly negotiated by these women to ensure advantageous

societal positions. Women from Latin American countries understand themselves as commodities sought after.

Methodology

Chaturbate is a pornographic website that provides live webcam performances by individual webcam models and couples. The site is divided into three gender categories: women, men, and trans. As pornography industries continue to innovate approaches to sexual expression, despite constant surveillance backed by morality arguments, they also help to create racialized sexual industries. Pornography websites organize archives of content using gender and race categories. For example, the Latina hashtag on Chaturbate organizes all Latina models who employ the term into a subset of content. This content is easily found by consumers looking for specific racialized sexualities. Virtual travel simulates the act of sex tourism, whereby Internet surfers can virtually travel to different corners of the world and engage in sex in virtual space, using hashtags to arrive at their preferred destination. I utilize *virtual ethnography* in reference to my use of the Internet and as an analytic to understand global mediated desire online (Schaeffer, 2013).

I began this study by visiting Chaturbate.com and clicking the Latina hashtag, which directed me to a filtered page with webcam models who utilize the tag. I visited the site at 11 am, 3 pm, and 9 pm pacific standard time. I chose various times in the day to widen my dataset to account for models with different work schedules or time zones. There were no significant differences in population and age range within the three selected time windows. I went into every room on the first page to note the models' age, location, and language.

I then randomly selected rooms from the bottom of page two. I did the same process during all time frames. As I browsed through the catalog, I selected rooms on the first two

pages because these models had high numbers of viewers. The site's algorithm placed them at the top of the tag page, giving them more traffic in their chat rooms. I entered 300 rooms, 100 during each time slot stated above. The further I scrolled down and onto other pages, the fewer viewers models had. The highest number of viewers was for a webcam room on the first page, the first row, with 5,414 viewers. I observed the least number of viewers for a webcam room on the second page, the sixteenth row, with only six viewers. The age range of the models I observed was 18-48. Of the 300 models I observed, 174 stated they were from Colombia (58%), and 88 did not include a location (29%)[16]. 86 models noted they spoke Spanish only (29%), and 165 models noted they spoke Spanish and English (55%).

Models utilized music during their transmissions and national flags to signal their Latina identities in their biographical sections. Many models from Colombia had studio affiliations listed on their profiles. I then shifted my analysis from models on Chaturbate.com to webcam studios. There are a few reasons why I analyzed this webcam studio rather than interviewing webcam models directly. First, *COVID*-19 impacted my travel plans, and I could not visit studios in person. This made connecting with models very difficult and expensive because I often had to tip models to get their attention to even read my requests for a paid interview. My original plan was to physically be in Colombia, meet workers outside their studios, and form organic relationships while introducing myself as a researcher. This approach changed the scope of this study because I had to rely on images and promotions curated by webcam studio companies. Second, webcam workers are extremely hard to reach in ethical ways. To contact workers, specifically in Latin American countries, I had to watch their

[16] I further investigated models' locations who did not disclose on their Chaturbate profile by following their social media links. Many of which stated on their social media platforms that they were based in Colombia or Valenzuela. It is very likely that models who did not disclose their locations are in Colombia or in other Latin American countries.

webcam shows. This felt unethical because they were not consenting to be observed by a researcher while doing their job. Upon further investigation, I also learned that models who work for studios often do not directly chat with viewers. Instead, studio staff provide translation services in real-time and chat in place of the model. This created an added difficulty in contacting models who worked for studios.

At first, I only entered and stayed in rooms where workers were not performing sexual acts; if they performed sexual acts, I left the room. After a few days, even that felt uncomfortable. I shifted to using the chat function (which required paying a monthly membership fee to the website to chat with the performers). I chatted with them in Spanish, gave them my name, institutional affiliation, and my personal Instagram account in case they wanted to reach out to me with questions or for an interview, and then left the room. A few models friended me, and they are now my point of contact for future research trips to Colombian webcam studios. This chapter focuses less on Chaturbate.com and more on analyzing the studio's Instagram page. This choice allowed me to avoid watching sexual shows and focus on the studio industry. Future research will require that I visit and work at studios in Colombia and gain permission to watch models during transmissions.

I came across Lily Dawn[17], a consistent top model on Chaturbate.com; while observing the Latina tag, she remained exclusively on the first and second rows while I was online. I became interested in her chat rooms because of her popularity and regular presence online. Her biographical information noted that she worked for a studio named DESMADRE Studio[18]. Upon learning of DESMADRE Studio, I closely followed their Instagram account page, watching their live-streaming shows and interviews with models, cleaning staff, and

[17] This is an assigned alias for a model who I observed online.
[18] This is an assigned alias for a studio based in an urban, metropolitan coastal city in Colombia.

other studio staff. When I first began researching DESMADRE, they only had one location. They have since expanded to two other major cities in Colombia. Their Instagram account has a following of 294,000 as of May 2021. Like many studios in Colombia, DESMADRE uses Instagram as its primary platform to recruit more models and advertise specific models. The studio curates the content the models produce, molding various images of sexuality, nation, and race. For example, none of DESMADRE's ten public models are Black, even though Colombia has the second largest Black population in Latin America behind Brazil. DESMADRE does, however, employ two Black women as housekeeping staff.

Limitations

One of the significant limitations of this study is my inability to travel to Colombia due to *COVID-19*. I planned to visit various studios in Colombia for six months and work as a monitora, a webcam model language coach. While this opportunity is unavailable, I plan to spend a shorter amount of time in Colombia in 2023. Therefore, my understanding of how the studio functions and the relationship between webcam models, staff, and ownership is limited to how the studio's Instagram account portrays itself. Connecting with Colombian models and studios has been challenging. I have had to be very creative with contacting models and webcam studio management, especially since the Colombian government recently increased industry regulation. La Dirección de Impuestos y Aduanas Nacionales (The Directorate of National Taxes and Customs, DIAN) has begun evaluating and regulating businesses associated with the webcam industry, causing a sense of surveillance and uncertainty for those working in the industry. The DIAN works for a "more honest Colombia" and implements monitoring practices as the webcam industry expands at unprecedented levels. "Previous work already carried out by the DIAN has made it possible to identify several service providers from

this group that is currently failing to fulfill their obligations in the country" (Forbes, 2022). Like the global regulation and criminalization of sex work, Colombia has cracked down on the industry.

Understanding Chaturbate's Business Model and How Studios Fit

Models make the bulk of their earnings from tips and private shows. For consumers to be able to tip, they must buy tokens from Chaturbate. After receiving tokens, models can convert them to cash. Chaturbate takes a 50% cut from these earnings. If a model works for a studio, the studio will also take a cut from Chaturbate's payout, that percentage ranges depending on the model's contract with the studio. And you may be wondering why a model would choose to work for a studio when they can make so much more independently. And that would be a great question. It became evident that studios offered a sense of security and support that made models more willing to enter the industry through a studio rather than as independent models. Models and studios compete for tokens, so their desirability and positioning on the site are crucial for economic success. Models and studios may embody desirous sexualities that set them apart from other models to maximize earnings. Studios make up a large portion of revenue for webcam industries outside of the U.S. Colombia's webcam model industry is estimated to be worth about 40 million dollars (USD), with over 5,000 webcam companies that do business within Colombia (Franco, 2022; Kussin, 2022). Studios are competing to create branding for successful models because successful models mean higher earning margins for the company.

Studios in Colombia—Building The Latina Body in DESMADRE Studio

A webcam studio is a physical location where models work, equipped with various rooms staged as bedrooms. In addition to offering physical space, the studios provide technical support such as high-speed internet, computers, and staff. Webcam studios are essential

industries that offer the potential for economic stability and upward mobility for both models and administrative staff. Webcam studio investors and management staff have high stake investments in destigmatizing this work since studios, on average, keep 50% of models' earnings. Webcam studios are increasingly common; they range from small teams of less than ten models to large businesses with multiple locations, employing hundreds of thousands of models. The webcam studio industry offers infrastructure and support for models interested in entering the industry. It is equipped with various rooms staged as bedrooms. In addition to offering physical space, the studios provide technical support such as high-speed internet, computers, cameras, equipment, and staff that even help models plan their shows. The studio also provides promotional opportunities to build a brand around models, building a following through social media marketing strategies. This would be particularly appealing to new models with no experience and no following. Because otherwise, it can be very easy to get lost in the endless catalogs of models on Chaturbate and make no money.

Colombian webcam studios offer *monitores*, staff who specifically aid models with translation services, and on providing authentic connections with virtual travelers who make their way to visit these workers. Small, independent webcam studios in Colombia rely on Instagram to circulate information about hiring practices, the life of a webcam model, and the opportunity for upward mobility. Instagram is used for advertising "earning U.S. dollars" and "making your dreams come true." DESMADRE Studio paints a seductive image of the possibilities of economic independence by uploading video interviews with models who share their financial success, such as buying their own apartments and reaching their versions of financial freedom. Given Colombia's economy and job scarcity, the webcam studio industry positions itself as a promising industry worth entering.

Monitores

Webcam studios are popular outside of North America, especially outside of the U.S. and have become essential industries that offer the potential for economic stability and upward mobility for both models and administrative staff. In places like Colombia, webcam studios offer *monitores*, staff who specifically aid models with translation services, and coaching to provide authentic connections with virtual travelers who make their way to visit these workers regularly. On top of the technical support the studio offers, the studio industry offers important infrastructure such as scheduling and accountability. Many models also discuss how essential it is to have a regular work schedule and accountability that maximizes earnings because so much of the work is building a consistent fanbase. Monitores are responsible for supporting models and providing any training on equipment use and staging shows. They also give advice on how models should structure their shows, tips on how to get viewers to request private shows to maximize earnings.

Monitores monitor chat rooms and guide models during live streaming. Monitores are often typing patrons on behalf of models; they are responsible for holding conversations with visitors and generally are bilingual in English as a requirement for employment. Although some small independent studios only employ women, Monitores are overwhelmingly men. This is an important note that connects to methods and my outreach, all my messages on the website were mediated through monitores, which adds to the difficulty of connecting with performers. The relationships between cam models and monitores are comparable to that of the relationship between a shift manager and an employee. Monitores are responsible for overseeing the logistical operations of the studio, such as monitoring the attendance of models, scheduling, and ensuring models are working efficiently while transmitting.

As I have researched the studio industry, I have also noted an internet subculture for webcam models where internal jokes about the industry are shared online. For example, meme pages that are run by models who make jokes about dynamics between monitores and models that suggest tensions and playful ways to address those discomforts amongst models who must report to monitores. In this Instagram video reel, Instagram personality LiaCam created a video mocking the dynamics between Monitores and models. This subculture suggests there are various modes of resistance between models and staff that take place within the studio industry—illuminating complicated dynamics between models, staff, and studio owners.

Contract Tensions

I also found that models found ways of subtle resistance through analyzing their contracts with studios. Various studios approach contracting models differently. Like the pornography industry in the U.S., it is common for webcam studios in Colombia to contract models as independent contractors rather than employees. Contracts can differ; however, I found that a common clause in studios' approaches to contracts was to include an Image Rights Release Agreement. The Studio commits to protecting the personal data of the model and offering in exchange advertising the model's stage name to position the model as a brand. The studios see this as investing time and money to make the model grow in followers and customers. Therefore, they own all rights to the model's performance name. If the model wants to withdraw, she can't use her stage name any longer. This can cause models to lose their fanbase and regular income stream since, to be successful on camming sites, you must build a following and be consistently present online to meet customers.

However, I did find that some models found loopholes around their contracts. For example, a model who I will call Lucia, whom I met on Chaturbate and connected with on

Instagram, built her brand up with a studio and decided to begin an independent career. She began to make the shift into using a name she now owned. She sent direct messages to her followers and told them she would be "moving" to a different name. She asked her followers to meet her. In this case, there was no clause in her contract that stated she couldn't give her regulars her new information and Lucia was able to transition into an independent model seamlessly. I also found that models invoked other coded forms of communication such as writing out their new usernames and flashing them to their viewers during transmissions to avoid being detected by supervisors. This highlights some tensions between studio administrative staff and models.

Legitimizing the Industry LALEXPO

Models, staff, and studio owners have high stakes in legitimizing the webcamming studio industry. Studio owners have large incentives in normalizing the industry. For example, successful webcam owners offer consultation services for prospective investors in the industry. These groups are growing in number and are part of the Latin American Adult Entertainment Industry Expo group called LALEXPO. LALEXPO is comparable to the Adult Video Network Awards based in the U.S. which meets annually in Las Vegas. This awards ceremony is a weekend long event and brings together the business components of the pornography industry with performers and fans. It is a way to network within the industry and to sell consultation services as well as fan merchandise.

Similarly, LALEXPO brings together studio businesses personnel from Latin American countries to discuss various industry related issues and technological advances. Studios can pay a fee to attend the various business meetings. The 2022 meeting fee was 500 dollars USD for an individual studio owner, and packages for larger studio administrative groups ranging from 1,000-3,000 dollars. The 2022 meeting also held components of the

growing regulation of the industry and the discriminatory practices that pornography industries face. The 2022 meeting was supposed to take place in Barranquilla, Colombia, and in the week leading to the event, the city did not approve the necessary permits to allow the event to take place. This cancellation was in response to fears of heightened threats of human trafficking. Many sex industries face this challenge because consensual sex work is commonly conflated with human trafficking. I can talk more about this in the Q&A if anyone has questions because this is a very complex issue. But back to LALEXPO. Organizers of the event, most of which are studio owners, took to social media to campaign around the injustices of discriminating against the industry. They cited the amount of money the city would be losing for hosting an event of this magnitude. Juan Bustos, a major studio industry person who owns hundreds of studios throughout Colombia, published a statement about how harmful these views against the industry are. Stating that many people rely on money from this industry to live. LALEXPO eventually was granted permits and moved the event to Medellin. However, this instance notes the critical investment in preserving the industry from a business perspective.

Studios also encourage workers to join their teams and help to "break taboos" about sex in Colombia. For example, DESMADRE Studio offers a segment on their Instagram called *Cambiando Pensamientos, Changing Beliefs*. This segment allows their followers, potential workers, and fans to ask models questions. *Changing Beliefs* addresses the stigma around the sex trade and elevates the voices of models who work in the industry. Questions featured in this segment include a follower asking, "How do you defend your profession to people with traditional ideas?" The model responds to the camera, "I understand that there are people who don't sympathize with this profession. But I think I am not harming anyone with my actions. I am comfortable with what I do and am proud of what I do. And realistically, it is a profession

that allows me to achieve my personal goals and help my family with theirs" (Instagram, 2020). This segment works to address stigma and nuance the conversations about webcam work in an otherwise conservative and Catholic country. It informs potential webcam models and legitimizes the industry. DESMADRE's work to debunk myths and taboos ensures the longevity of success for the company and, in turn, the success of the models they employ.

Understanding Webcam Studios Through Global Mediated Desire

Webcam studios in Colombia are the direct product of crises brought on by a global mediated desire for Latin American resources. Webcam studios, including DEMASDRE, partake in marketing processes that deliver a U.S.-manufactured product of Latina sexualities, building The Latina Body out of a homogenizing and simultaneously nation-specific idea of Latina sexuality. "Latina" is a desirous category, but what does it mean to embody Latinidad? And who has access and claims to market themselves as "Latina"? As I argue above, the reproduction of images of Latinas is attached to myths of excessive sexuality and uncontrollable desire that justify invasive and extractive policy from the U.S. into Latin American countries. Like Arlene Davila's foundational 2001 study *Latinos, Inc*., I understand The Latina Body as a socially constructed category that operates on exclusion and alignment with whiteness.

Latina sexualities are an example of how the U.S. uses sexualities to expand capital into Latin American countries. However, these sexualities are carefully constructed and advertised through a consumable and palatable lens. Carmen Miranda's public image exemplifies this phenomenon. As I noted above, Miranda was a European-born Portuguese woman whose body came to signify the abundance of both the resources of Latin American countries and the bodies of Latinas. However, Miranda was phenotypically white, and although

she embodied Black Brazilian aesthetics, her whiteness sanitized any traces of Blackness to export a clean, white, smiling image of Latinas for export. Miranda's friendly and palatable image was necessary to encourage the growing consumption of bananas in U.S. households. The myth of the Latina Body serves as a model for what is simultaneously desired, such as the natural resources of the land and feared most, the embodied sexualities of Latinas. These ideologies of control aid in the expansion of capital but also have implications for other social control tactics, such as forced sterilization[19]. This framework on the history of curating Latina sexualities for export is crucial for future research on Latin America's booming webcam studio industries.

DESMADRE Studio constructs and reifies the histories outlined above in several ways. First, DESMADRE uses advertisements to explicitly create mediated fantasies that correspond to their idea of "making" models and The Latina Body a reality. Much like manufacturing and assembling a product, the studio crafts sexual fantasy by selecting and training specific types of women. This manufacturing process does not negate that women in webcam work can navigate their positions and may find joy, pleasure, and emancipation in embodying these narratives. That agency, however, occurs within the context of macro relationships between international trade policy and the cultural productions of The Latina Body more broadly. In my analysis of DESMADRE Studio, I found that the administrative staff managed the images and models transmitted to a global audience on Chaturbate.com. For example, DESMADRE's CEO, Julio Ochoa, plays a prominent role in the models who are hired[20]. Ochoa posted an

[19] For more information on U.S. government sponsored forced sterilization programs that targeted Latinas see Gutiérrez, 2008.

[20] Although this is public information, I changed the name of the CEO to protect the identities of the models employed with this studio.

Instagram video clarifying that DESMADRE Studio only employs what he defines as women. He explains, “DESMADRE currently only employs women, no Trans, no Gay.” Ochoa plays a significant role in curating the product he sells, The Latina Body. As mentioned above, The Latina Body is a commodity deconstructed and constructed to fit an idea. Ochoa plays firsthand in this creation, building a non-Black, cisgender, heterosexual Latina image for export. This curation allows for DESMADRE to maximize earnings on a site like Chaturbate.com, which operates on algorithms that organize hierarchies of desire delegating Black and other models of color to the bottom of pornography search pages (Jones, 2015; Miller-Young, 2014).

Second, DESMADRE Studio in Colombia is a case study showing how the webcam studio industry works to recreate colonial imaginaries to be successful on webcam sites. Virtual travelers seek a constantly made and remade product, and to be “made” in DESMADRE Studio is to be marketed and created into an idea of Latinidad. At the same time, DESMADRE facilitates marketing campaigns for those eager to become financially successful cam models in the desirous category of “Latina.” The histories outlined in this chapter are essential in understanding how and why we desire The Latina Body. DESMADRE Studio utilizes Instagram advertising strategies that illustrate their conscious understanding of “creating” models.

DESMADRE illustrates the process of creating the Latina through a series of images published on their Instagram. In the “Made in DESMADRE Studio” advertisement series, the studio uses a specific artistic style, forming the product, the models themselves, as not quite finished. At the center of the Instagram post is the model’s head and bare upper chest, their bodies at the center of a pastel, pink, and lavender backdrop. You see pieces of the model’s skin piecing together to complete their faces. The image is striking, like a Cyborg, half-human,

half-artificial intelligence. And while the studio has asserted control over the creation and distribution of their images, their faces, some smiling, smirking and seductively staring, unearth the radical possibilities of agency, playfulness, and desire that the Cyborg image elicits. She was created with the intention of seduction, to mesmerize and entrance, to make the viewer want to engage and feel a sense of obligation to consume her. The studio states they have "made" this product, yet there is an understanding that the product is a living, breathing, racialized person navigating global mediated desires written on her body. And just like the Cyborg, she is a horror, feared for her radical potential to destroy and rebuild global economies.[21]

Conclusion and Future Directions

While further theorization on Latina sexualities as strategic tools in global accumulation is necessary, I am particularly interested in questions about how Latinas navigate this in their online work. How do Latina women who are phenotypical outliers engage with this market? What negotiation strategies do workers invoke to set boundaries for themselves as they perform The Latina Body? The tensions between the studio, global capitalism, and the models themselves signify an always convoluted desire for the commodities of Latin American countries.

In this chapter, I have outlined a research area within sex work studies focusing on Colombia. I have argued that scholars should pay particular attention to the correlation between U.S. policy, such as trade agreements, and how they impact sexual economies in Latin American countries. The webcam studio in Colombia is a case study that illuminates the historical tensions between the U.S.'s imperialist relationship with countries in Latin American

[21] I use Cyborg based on Chela Sandoval's reading of Donna Haraway's Cyborg Feminisms. See Sandoval, 2000.

countries. The growing webcam studio industry in Colombia is an example of how trade policies rely on the construction of racialized and gendered sexual economies. Further research should center on understanding how webcam models working in studios outside of the U.S. actively embody ideas of racialized gender and nation in their performances at work.

Recommended Reading

Approaches to studying the webcam industry have been numerous and encompass various themes. For a discussion of the Sociology of pleasure and the role of fun in webcam model's performances, see Angela Jones's study (2020). For discussing how webcam models navigate competition on online adult entertainment platforms, see van Doorn & Velthuis (2018). For more information on the sex trades and how they are surveilled and policed in person and online, see Mac & Smith (2018) and *Hacking//Hustling*. To better understand Colombia's history of exporting sexualities through the Cybermarriage industry, see Schaeffer (2015).

Conclusion and Future Directions

Reflections from a Latina's Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness

The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered resource of power and information within our lives.
--Audre Lorde

Every time I write, a part of me dies.

The process of writing is similar to taking a knife to your body.
Carving pieces of your face out so that you can tell the truths of your fragmented consciousness. There is a fear in the writing process.
Fear of being misunderstood.
Coopted.
Overlooked.
There is a fear of unlocking another world that this world may not be ready for.
I am not ashamed to say that I have hid behind the unspoken.
It is comforting.
To sit in silence next to my father.
Silence hugs me.
Soothes me.
Allows me to fall deep into myself in an indulgence of intellectual inquiry.
In a world existing in my fragmented consciousness.

Not ready to share.

Silence communicates and tells us about ourselves and our bodies as subjects.
The racialized body too speaks a language of encrypted silence, creating meaning in absence of speech.
In an instant, your body communicates a history—a violent legacy. Our bodies given imposed responsibility for our race and for our ancestors. My survival is dependent on my understanding of this responsibility—on my fluency in the unspoken realm of coloniality. I am left responsible for the residue, for the imprints, left on my body.

Silence is the seventh member of my family.
It sits on the mantel next to La Virgen de Guadalupe.
Smirking as we reach for it.
Understanding its power. Its implications. Its residue.

Every time I write, a part of me dies.

Isolated in a room with my books. Theorists painting new worlds before my very eyes.
My mind consumed with thoughts I cannot seem to put down on paper.
Why am I afraid of the writing?
Am I afraid of *seeing* the truth? Of *seeing* myself?
I sit at my desk in my mother's bedroom. Surrounded by my mother's love. By all of my favorite author's words. And still I sit there stunted by my own mind.
I am carving my own flesh trying to get the words out.
The pain is in enlightenment. In conociemiento. The knowledge expanding my consciousness.
There was a time last year when I read Third World Feminists authors for three months straight.
I re-envisioned worlds again and again. I scared myself out of my body, floating in the abyss for three days.
I am reminded of mythologies. Of illusions.
If I do not write me voy a enloquecer.

Every time I write, a part of me dies.

Maybe it's the part that refuses to *see.* Writing is the intergalactic portal of possibility.

It transforms you into a sphere where multiple worlds exist at once.
I've never dropped acid but Chela Sandoval's teachings transport my consciousness and I don't know if I will ever be the same. People talk about trips as forms of enlightenment. But with my family's history with schizophrenia, trips are my daily reality. Fragmentation is enlightenment.
My consciousness once travelled and tapped into another dimension.
I somehow was there and here.
When I tell you that I can *see* I need you to believe that the "I" in this world has died over and over and over again.

Every time I write, a part of me dies.

Maybe I am not ready to burst the ideological enclosures I have learned to detect. But I live in between the shadows of ideology. I feel the fist punching up through my throat.
Urging me to speak out—to expose.

Every time I write, a part of me dies because those parts of me were conditioned to be blinded, and every time I die, I can *see.*

So you see, I must write, so that parts of me can die, and so that I can see.

…

As I come to the end of this dissertation, I am approaching the end of a foundational period of my life. I am getting ready to say goodbye to the institution that facilitated so much of my

intellectual growth. I am moving across the country to pursue a job on an unfamiliar coast. Like many others, this dissertation symbolizes many parts of me that have died. That I have killed and that have been killed unwillingly. It has been one of the most challenging periods of my life. I begin the conclusion with a poem that exemplifies the pain in consciousness, in shapeshifting. The way that it sometimes feels like you are carving your own face out. At the beginning of this dissertation, I outlined a particular form of consciousness that illuminates how the birth of capitalism is tied to gender and sex. A consciousness that scares us out of our bodies because it forces us to sit with the understanding that labor, as we know it, dominates our lives. In many ways, this poem is a meditation on the role of fear in my life: knowing something to be so deeply true in your heart yet wanting to deny it to yourself. Sex worker consciousness is sort of like that too.

When I embarked on this journey of studying sex work in a Chicana and Chicano Studies department, I knew it would be challenging because there is no sex work emphasis within the field. Latina sexualities studies have pivoted to specific interests in how hypersexualization negatively impacts youth, an oftentimes asexual field devoid of pleasure or nuance about sex. When I arrived as a fully slutty working-class whore, I was met with hushed tones of the inappropriateness of my embodiment. Overheard conversations about how my false eyelashes made me look like a prostitute (an expensive one, I hope). My work was infantilized and chalked up to "she doesn't know what she's talking about." I used to leave faculty members' office hours in tears, confused, and my words twisted into circles of uncertainty. When I made the decision to continue on this path, I knew it would be challenging because I lacked the language to articulate what I have been theorizing about through my lived experiences because that language has been purposefully illegible.

As I navigated the world in my body, I was trying to bring language to a phenomenon that I knew was deeply layered in the parts of me I have been conditioned to hide. The emotional, the spiritual, the erotic. The way that my work has been received by specific faculty members in the field of Chicana and Chicano Studies is a wider commentary on how marginalized people, particularly sex workers, are chastised for shedding light on injustice. Flirting with, fucking, and taunting the social order. Exposing its contradictions. I have felt like a simulation glitch trying to do this work in this field. U.S. Third World feminist thinkers have deeply influenced this work and my view of the world. And like their writings and legacies, this dissertation is rooted in naming a skill that racialized and sexualized subjects acquire as they navigate the dehumanizing conditions of the 21st century.

This research shows how histories of colonization are crucial in understanding how sexual desire and economic desire work in conjunction. The sex trades illuminate how global economies rely on histories of hypersexualization to justify economic desires for expansion. I have outlined the historical context that allows us to understand how The Latina Body is a colonial fantasy and a tool for imperialist expansion. In turn, entire sexual economies are created in countries like Colombia with the case of webcam studios and in the U.S. with the growing content creator industry on OnlyFans. The Latina Body, then, is a necessary desirous category that aids in the economic penetration of countries in Latin America and is also a commodity that can be sought after and consumed, creating robust sexual economies.

Synthesis of Findings

To answer my research questions—1) How does U.S. foreign policy influence sexual identities for Latina women and create an imaginary Latina Body 2) How are sex economies created and perpetuated in this process? 3) How do Latina-identified women navigate their

identities in digital sex work? 4) How do Latina-identified women express agency and pleasure in these processes while being critical of Global Capitalism's effect on their working conditions? —I analyzed the U.S.'s economic relationship with countries in Latin America, such as Colombia. I also closely read Portuguese-Brazilian star Carmen Miranda's performance of "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat" to contextualize the historical positioning of Latina aesthetics as marketable in a wider agenda for economic expansion. I analyzed Cardi B's social media presence and cultural contributions to a sex worker discourse. I defined sex worker discourse as an explicit questioning of gendered labor while making the coercive nature of work itself visceral. To better understand how sex workers negotiate their desirability and agency while working online, I interviewed Latina content creators on OnlyFans.com. Many workers set their own terms and boundaries while navigating racialization and sexualization online. I then turned to the webcam studio industry to understand how new industries based on sexual desire are created and sustained. I analyzed the unique trade histories between the U.S. and Colombia to understand how economic desires from the U.S. helped shape robust sexual economies in Colombia.

Some of the central research questions that has guided this dissertation are, how has the U.S. economic system utilized sexuality to build capital and profit? And in particular, how have Latinas been hypersexualized to accomplish this feat? What are the wide-ranging connections between sexual economies and economic expansion? How does U.S. foreign policy aid in creating The Latina Body and desire for Latinidad? In chapter one, I pieced together a framework to understand how sexualization processes are a historical process connected to wealth accumulation. Again, this is a historical process linked to the period of enslavement and colonization. Hypersexualization is a constructed narrative that served to

build capital and control populations, such as forcing women who were enslaved to reproduce and build more labor power.

Similarly, women who were colonized symbolized an abundance of land and resources that needed to be contained. Their sexualities became public forms of desire that symbolized a desire for resources. Decolonial theory gives a framework for describing how sexuality is connected to political economy. In this chapter, I found that Carmen Miranda's body has been a historical example of how popular culture merges with public policy to create an insatiable desire for economic expansion. Miranda's iconography exemplified Latin American aesthetics that were often categorized as excessive. Her body became a recognizable signifier for the ripe fruit in Latin American countries, such as bananas. Her image was used by La United Fruit Co. to build banana republics in countries such as Guatemala. In the case of Latin American countries, a desire for The Latina Body has served as a prominent aid in penetrating Latin American countries and extracting resources while destabilizing local economies.

I found that this imperialist relationship between the U.S. and Latin American countries creates sexual desires based on economic desires. Desire is a critical frame that has helped me make sense of how sexual desire and the legacies of imperialism impact global economies presently. I argued that in order to understand how imperialist desire merges with sexual desire, we must apply a decolonial lens to our analysis. Decolonial theory unearths significant historical contexts that have organized how sexuality and economic expansion are intertwined. However, I also outlined how decolonial theory illuminates the ways that the sexualization of racialized people aids in processes of domination. I outlined a theoretical framework that describes a matrixing of sexuality, desire, and economic systems. I also argued that in order to fully understand this matrixing, we must center sex work in our analysis.

The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities

In this chapter one, I proposed an area of study called The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities. The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities seriously considers the histories of colonization and imperialism that shape how desire is constructed and enacted in the Americas. The sex trades give specific insight into understanding how imperialism and sexuality are wedded and seek to outline how Latinas who work in sexual economies are navigating global processes of trade and accumulation. They negotiate how their bodies signal immense economic potential and imperialist lust for growth. The Political Economy of Latina Sexualities situates sex work as a foundational area of study that bridges together a robust understanding of racialization and labor. More importantly, though, it names how Latina sexualities are integral to U.S. imperialism and economic expansion.

My theorization of Latina sexualities highlights three levels that Latina sex workers learn to negotiate 1) structural global processes, 2) communal respectability politics, and 3) individual working conditions and relationships. In *Methodologies of the Oppressed,* Chela Sandoval outlines the sophisticated methodologies women of color call upon to navigate power. Women of color negotiate racialized sexualized tropes in various capacities ranging from pornography work, self-fashioning, and embodiment practices, respectively. In this dissertation, I introduced *flirtation* as a theoretical concept that describes using racialized sexuality to manipulate gendered and racialized oppression. *Flirtation* exists on the structural level and through everyday practices of Latina sex workers navigating interpersonal dynamics while flirting with historical categorizations placed on their bodies. This process of *flirting* describes a particular consciousness that is aware of how the sexualized body navigates this double-meaning *desire*. *Flirtation* is used here to specifically address Latina embodiment.

Latina sexualities are put to work by corporations and politicians to expand U.S. investments and business opportunities. While U.S. corporations and politicians benefit from the hypersexualization of Latinas, Latinas are left to navigate complicated views about their bodies independently. Because of how their sexualities are put to work, Latinas are categorized as hyper-fertile, hyper-sexual, and dangerous to the State via over-population. They are embedded in social discourses that rationalize and justify policies used to control their reproductive abilities, such as forced sterilization and cuts to welfare. *Flirtation* illuminates how they fuck these systemic inequalities back. Their knowledge and overt welcoming of a sexualized gaze complicate our understanding of agency, pleasure, and navigational capital. *Flirtation* denotes playfulness and agential possibilities.

Although Latina racialized hypersexuality has emerged from discourses and structures of violence, my research uncovers how Latinas may identify with, strategically employ, or find possibility within these types of embodiments. On the one hand, Latinas are tasked with carrying histories of imperialist policies that work to create a market based on desiring their sexual labor; on the other, that same sexual labor is criminalized and rendered shameful by their communities. Latina sex workers begin navigating multiple realities and learn to create new categories of being rooted in a critical awareness of sexual labor. In this dissertation, I called this process Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness. This particular consciousness reaches toward liberation and locates racialized sexualities as a methodology and lens for disidentifying, or as Mireille Miller-Young suggests, an opportunity to put "hypersexuality to work" (Muñoz; 1999, Miller-Young; 2015). As I noted earlier in this paragraph, the U.S. has strategically employed Latina sexualities to expand and extract capital across borders; Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness intervenes and puts that same sexuality to work, navigating the

negative impacts in the process. In this dissertation, I suggest a framework that articulates the flirtatious nature of Latina sex workers, who utilize their racialized positions to address surveillance and anxieties about their bodies at these three levels.

I used a content analysis approach in chapter two to understand Cardi B's cultural contributions. I also utilized what Chela Sandoval calls witnessing and metawitnessing to understand Cardi's cultural and political context, which makes her cultural work significant. Cardi's contributions to how we understand sex worker discourse and labor are particularly significant because her sex worker consciousness is also accompanied by her multifaceted identity as a Black Latina. Her access to an alternate consciousness exists doubly through her racial identity categorization and her categorization as a former sex worker. I analyzed her social media presence on the social media platform Instagram and her participation in the reality tv show Love & Hip Hop. Her entrance into mainstream media ruptured a widespread understanding of sexual labor and racialized femininity. I argued that Cardi's identities created a recognizable sex worker discourse that has illuminated tensions between mainstream media and the sex trades. Her articulation of demanding compensation for sexual labor and intimacy and her overt stance on solidarity with working people sheds light on the intricate relationships between sex workers and larger social justice movements, particularly associated with poverty.

In chapter three, I interviewed Latina content creators who sell content on the online platform OnlyFans. Through these interviews, I found various themes they spoke on, such as aesthetic practices, negotiating "Latina" in their advertisements, navigating surveillance on other social media platforms, and safety. The people I interviewed had a strong understanding of how their bodies were desires and negotiated that desire to make a living through selling

content online. In chapter four, I analyzed U.S. media depictions of Latina sexualities, such as Sofia Vergara's character in the ABC hit show *Modern Family*. I argued that these depictions must be discussed with the U.S. and Colombian trade policies. Therefore, I analyzed the U.S.—Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement to understand the history of trade relations and economic destabilization in Colombia. I found that while Colombian sexualities were being constructed as desirable on U.S. media programs such as *Modern Family*, U.S. companies were free to do business in Colombia without paying tariffs. U.S.-owned Colombian products such as coffee remain increasingly popular and coveted, while Colombian women's sexualities reflect the same increasing popularity. The final body chapter of the dissertation culminates in the analysis of the booming webcam industry in Colombia. Colombian webcam models are highly sought after, so the webcam studio industry is now lucrative in Colombia.

Practical Applications Further Directions

Every dissertation is incomplete by nature. I have heard this time and time again, yet, I still battle with feeling unsatisfied with the state in which this draft is in. Unsatisfied because the vision I have for this project is much more promising. Fortunately, I feel confident and excited about how this end is the beginning of a project I will work on for years. At the end of this stage, I see many holes in my data collection. As I continue into a postdoctoral position, I hope to spend time collecting more data. I am particularly hopeful for the opportunity to visit webcam studios and spend an extended period of time there, also learning about Colombia's trade history. I plan to spend time in cities like Barranquilla and Bogota and cultivate relationships with local universities to access archives and resources that will help strengthen this book-length project. I also plan to collect ethnographic data and interviews with Colombian webcam models. In order to fully understand how Colombian women are

negotiating their positions in online sex work, I need to visit the studios and spend time building relationships with workers there in all facets of the industry. I also plan to expand my interviewees who use online platforms like OnlyFans.com.

I plan to expand my search to independent pornography actors who use various websites like ManyVids and JustForFans. As I begin developing courses in the next several years, I hope that my understanding of Sex Worker Cyborg Consciousness and the Political Economy of Latina Sexualities is deepened. I plan to submit this work to a major journal, such as Signs or Hypatia, in the 2023-2024 academic year. The peer-review process will allow me to elaborate my ideas and be concise with my language. I will present this work at the American Studies Association in 2023, which will begin this publication process. I hope this framework can begin conversations about sex work, political economy, and how Latinas relate to their sexualities.

I hope this dissertation is an entry point into a subfield within Latinx and Chicana and Chicano Studies that focuses on understanding how the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality are integrated into how capitalism functions. Like racial capitalism, this dissertation names a particular understanding of how capitalism is racialized and gendered. The sex trades give tremendous insight into this phenomenon. In order to understand the violence that sex workers face, both systemic and interpersonal, we must also understand the ways in which this category of labor has been inherently criminalized. Decolonial theory uncovers how sex has historically been a category for how capital is accumulated. This dissertation illuminates the relationship between criminalizing sex work to protect the State's interests. Meaning sex work is criminalized because sex is understood as labor that always belongs to the State, and sex workers are considered thieves and constantly criminalized. This theoretical framing allows

for a nuanced understanding of how policy around sex work is implemented. I hope that the implications of this work can help sex worker policy advocates address the implementation and passing of harmful laws that put sex workers in further vulnerable positions in society.

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