

## ABSTRACT

### What Fundamentalist Christian Universities Can Learn from Sex Workers About Consent Culture: A Cultural Study

Tabitha Josepha Leonards

Director: Sarah Walden, Ph.D.

At present, there remains an extensive gap in research regarding the connections between conservative Christian universities and campus rape culture. Through the lens of sex work, *What Fundamentalist Christian Universities Can Learn from Sex Workers About Consent Culture: A Cultural Study* aims to address this disparity by analyzing the shortfalls of both United States policy in preventing the marginalization of sex workers and fundamentalist Christian universities in maintaining student safety. Studying sex work in relation to rape culture on university campuses is a provocative but constructive approach to defining those taboo subjects—like sex, personal boundaries, and consent—which are often left out of the conversation and policies of conservative Christian universities. By highlighting the ways in which sex workers safely explore sexual intimacy through the practice of open dialogue, this thesis seeks to build an understanding of the kind of environment that is most conducive to the wellbeing and acceptance of university students.

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF HONORS THESIS:

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Dr. Sarah Walden, Baylor Interdisciplinary Core

APPROVED BY THE HONORS PROGRAM:

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Dr. Elizabeth Corey, Director

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES CAN LEARN FROM  
SEX WORKERS ABOUT CONSENT CULTURE: A CULTURAL STUDY

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By  
Tabitha Josepha Leonards

Waco, Texas

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## PREFACE

Among the unending litany of theses detailing the ostensibly bleak and threatening state of sexual exploitation in the U.S., *What Fundamentalist Christian Universities Can Learn from Sex Workers About Consent Culture: A Cultural Study* aims to first shine a light on the realities of both involuntary and voluntary sex work and so too redirect readers toward the many sex-work-positive studies conducted by those with firsthand experience. By no means does the focus of this thesis imply that the total dissolution of forced sex work is not absolutely necessary. Rather, this study includes sex workers as part of the solution in ending both sex and labor exploitation within a capitalist system that simultaneously uses and marginalizes dissimilar people groups. Fundamentalist Christian universities act as a microcosm of a larger political system through which we might analyze the enforcement of certain morals, norms, or codes of behavior on the sexually “deviant.” In the advent of a Christian fundamentalist revival within United States politics (FitzGerald, 2017), now is as good a time as any to examine the impacts of fundamentalist ideologies on Christian believers and university students alike.

This thesis utilizes voluntary sex work as a lens through which we might better understand the importance of consent culture as fostered within Christian university campuses and American society at large. Voluntary sex work is often distorted by politicians, religious do-gooders, and even secular, liberal feminists in favor of the idea that all persons within the sex trade are objectified and exploited pawns caught in the clutches of a global patriarchal system (Bindel, 2017; Beatley, 2018; “Why Prostitution Shouldn’t be Legal”, 2020). Society has created a narrative that tells women and gender

non-conforming persons they are “too good to sell themselves” while simultaneously and disproportionately subjecting them to struggles of poverty and injustice that push them towards earning a viable wage in more lucrative industries. This same society has constructed an idea of what it means to be in a healthy sexual relationship, usually one which cannot possibly be fulfilling unless it is monogamous, involving a particular gender, or is aimed toward a more long-term commitment (Anwar, 2015; Sheff, 2015). History, coincidence, and the personal preferences of powerful figures have shaped each of these narratives, yet they are treated as objective truths and used to condemn the behavior and livelihood of sex workers who, for whatever reasons, turn toward the sex industry.

Granted, while not all sex workers choose the work because it is their dream job or they find it empowering, not all sex workers are forced to perform sexual services or entertainment. This said, many if not most all United States sex workers—similar to a great number of the nation’s citizens—do fall victim to the abuses of American capitalism (Levitz, 2018; Desmond, 2019; Picche, 2019). Rather than get to understand the work of sex work, the reasons why sex workers pursue the industry, and/or do anything to fix those larger issues of a failing economic system, many politicians, religious believers, and anti-prostitution campaigners act on ignorance in supporting laws that endanger both voluntary sex workers and victims of sex and labor exploitation. *What Fundamentalist Christian Universities Can Learn from Sex Workers About Consent Culture: A Cultural Study* hopes to show that sex work, consent, and sexual intimacy is more complex than “sex is good,” “sex is bad,” “sex workers are slaves,” “sex workers are empowered,”

“consent is yes,” or “consent is no.” Policies surrounding sex and sex work should actively involve those who know sex and consent best: sex workers.

Aside from sex work, conservative Christian universities, specifically those which act upon fundamentalist ideologies, are the primary subjects of this analysis. The authority fundamentalist Christian universities exercise in governing the sexual behavior and expression of their students combines divine conviction with repressive and politically motivated fundamentalist tradition to foster a culture that shames students for “deviant” sexual behaviors and expressions. The noted silence of these institutions on taboo subjects like sex, sexuality, and sexual assault promotes a culture of rape and sexual violence that contradicts the Christian message of love.

The first chapter of this study begins with a comprehensive analysis on sex work and the plight of United States sex workers today. It is difficult to use sex work as a lens through which to view Christian universities and consent culture if those who labor within the industry are not first protected. Therefore, this thesis leads with sex work in an effort to better define and explain those policies that work to marginalize a community made vulnerable by stigma and discusses several proposed solutions to the criminalization of the trade of sex.

Chapter Two details the practice of Christian fundamentalism as well as the role Christian fundamentalist tradition has played in shaping the public’s perspective on sex work and the relegation of sexual intimacy to the private sphere. Following a brief history of Christian fundamentalism, this second chapter examines the negative implications of fundamentalist Christian university policies surrounding the sexual behavior of students. While the media has detailed the sexual assault scandals of universities like Baylor,

Pensacola Christian College, Wheaton College, and others ad nauseum, this study maintains the importance of calling out the ineptitude of higher institutions in ensuring student safety and continues to hold university administrators responsible for perpetuating an inhospitable campus climate of silence and shame.

Chapter Three ties together the three major themes of this study: sex work, Christian fundamentalism, and consent culture. After defining consent as outlined in U.S. legal code and the policies of Christian universities, Chapter Three examines consent culture as practiced by strippers, BDSM workers, online performers, and full-service sex workers and concludes with three final takeaways for Christian universities to improve their campus climate.

The difficulty in addressing both stigma against sex workers and harmful university policies surrounding sex is that, oftentimes, sentiments are not always explicit. There remains a gap in literature documenting the connections between conservative Christian universities and rape culture because sex is not openly discussed and administrators are actively ignoring or downplaying on-campus sexual violence. If not fill this gap, *What Fundamentalist Christian Universities Can Learn from Sex Workers About Consent Culture: A Cultural Study* aims to at least address its presence. Students, faculty, and university administrators must begin an open dialogue about sex in much the same way United States policymakers must acknowledge the reality of sex work. Only an honest and frank discussion on sex can work toward resolving the shame, guilt, and fear of sex workers and students alike. So then, to get the conversation started, let's talk about sex.

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To My Showtime Queens

and

In Memory of Donna Castleberry and All Our Lost Angels

## CHAPTER ONE

### Sex Work

“But now, the snake had reared her head and offered the forbidden fruit—a patriarchal myth that makes me, the sexual woman, responsible for original sin and all the suffering in the world”  
Carol Leigh, a.k.a. The Scarlet Harlot (Nagle, 2018, p. 228).

Before we can begin diving into the many nuances of sex work, the impact of law and stigma on sex workers, proffered and implemented models of sex work, and its connection to and differences from human labor exploitation and trafficking, it would be helpful to provide a standard definition. This, however, is no small task. Defining sex work has been a difficulty faced by policymakers, activists, and sex workers alike, insomuch as the language used to construct a narrative of autonomy or dependence, consent or a lack thereof, legitimate work or exploitation. While the reality of sex work may not be so straightforward, it is certain that the way in which a society defines sex work affects those who perform within the industry. This chapter will, in part, address how the conflation of consensual sex work with trafficking and sexual exploitation does not just have “severe implications” on the lives of sex workers. The language, policy, and activism underscored by the “victim” narrative has a literal body count (Simon, 2018).

That said, the modern sex workers’ rights movement has seen a diverse group of people publicly share their role within sex work, but not without much hesitation. This apprehension in disclosing their stories is rightly justified. The consequences for being discovered in many countries, especially within the United States, are countless. Incarceration, high rates of violence, loss of steady employment, loss of tenancy, and being separated from children are just some of the many “costs” of the criminalization of

sex work (Grant, 2014, p. 3-6). Yet, these penalties are not always directly linked to sex work, especially wherever sex work is decriminalized or regulated. The texts and personal testimonies of sex workers highlighted in this chapter will examine how the social perception of sex work shapes the policies governing the industry and the treatment of those who labor within it. Many sex workers acknowledge that the industry is not inherently dangerous or exploitative. The perception and treatment of sex workers is what makes the job difficult and unsafe.

### *What Is Sex Work?*

In *Thriving in Sex Work: Heartfelt Advice for Staying Sane in the Sex Industry*, Lola Davina defines a sex worker as “a person of any gender performing sexual services or providing sexual products in exchange for money or other things of value, including but not limited to strippers, BDSM (bondage, domination/discipline, and sadomasochism) professionals, porn actors, cam models, sugar babies, and prostitutes” (Davina, 2017, p. 6). The World Health Organization’s definition of sex work, while less comprehensive, similarly describes the trade of sexual services for resources. According to their definition, sex workers are “women, men and transgendered people who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services.” The World Health Organization is one of many global organizations that supports the decriminalization of sex work as a means of reducing HIV/AIDS and violence against women, and in so doing acknowledges the impact criminalization has on the treatment of sex workers (Overs, 2002, p. 2). Because society’s perception of sex workers is largely influenced by criminalization, it is important to carefully define and describe the work and those who perform within the

industry. Sex workers understood and pushed for the adjusting of harmful rhetoric over fifty years ago, and yet the United States' stance remains largely unchanged.

Carol Leigh knew that the language used to define and describe sex work shaped the way others perceived workers within the sex industry. Her shrewd account of the origination of the term “sex work” in the late 1970s offers a unique perspective from a sex worker of third–even fourth–wave ideals during the height of second-wave feminism. In *Whores and Other Feminists*, Leigh recalls a 1979 convention by Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media. It was there she invented the term “sex work” to represent the autonomy and responsibility of someone who performed in the sex trade, which conference-goers referred to as the “sex use industry” before Leigh explained how this misrepresented and victimized those who chose the work. Not only did her readiness to confront the popular view of sex workers eventually make its way into common vernacular, it broadened the traditional conception of sex workers as prostitutes—now more often referred to as full-service sex workers—to include exotic dancers, porn actors and actresses, dominatrices, and many other once thought unconventional professions. Leigh also worked to distinguish consensual transactions from the damaging, “feminist” idea of sex work as the objectification and use of women by men (Nagle, 2010, p. 229-230).

### *The Work*

In *Sex Work: Rethinking the Job, Respecting the Workers*, Bruckert et al. note the importance of this change of expression:

“The phrase [sex work] represents more than a linguistic subtlety. It reflects a powerful political intervention that undermines normative assumptions and

compels reconsideration not only of the sex industry and those that labour within it but of relegation of sexuality to the private realm” (Parent, 2014, p. 57).

In their chapter aptly named “The *Work* of Sex Work,” Bruckert and Parent exercise a degree of privilege in their ability to detail the specific practice of sex work. As non-sex-workers, the authors were able to describe the structures and processes of the industry without facing those same potential repercussions of sex-working artists who have chosen to disclose their personal experiences (Lee, 2015, p. 13-20). Specifically, Bruckert and Parent examine street-based, out-call, and in-call sex work from the perspective of labor theory, which considers sex work labor practices in association with other legitimate job markets. On that note, the authors acknowledged those differences of sex work from other professions, namely that sex work is criminalized, thereby making conditions more unsafe for sex workers as opposed to jobs protected by labor laws (Parent, 2014, p. 57).

Bruckert and Parent note that the sex industry contains both independent contractors and workers employed by third parties. Brothel workers and escorts who work for agencies may have scheduled shifts and dress codes. Street-based sex workers and other sex workers who work independently have the ability to set their own hours and keep all of what they make per hour or service provided. In-call sex workers have fewer safety risks in that clients come to meet them at a location where there is typically access to security, such as a brothel. Sex work demands a considerable skillset as workers are to be amiable, physically fit, understanding of diverse bodies and human anatomy, able to deescalate intense arguments and settle disagreements, and remain alert so as to maintain safety. It requires acting skills, money management, the ability to communicate successfully, and creative thinking (p. 57-75). Similar to NFL football players or runway

models, sex workers use their bodies to sell a service and, contrary to popular rhetoric, do not in fact “sell their bodies” or their right to consent. However, because the work is criminalized, sex workers are often exploited by management, clients, police officers, and predators. In an effort to avoid being caught or harassed by police, street-based sex workers often resort to selling services either alone or in remote locations. This severely minimizes their chances of receiving help should a transaction go awry or if they are targeted by an aggressor (Grant, 2014, p. 5-27). Police often report instances of abuse or even the murder of sex workers as “No Human Involved” (NHI) cases, allowing abusers to get away with routine violence (Starr, 2017).

While sex work seems a long way off from receiving the same social acceptance and protections as other job markets, viewing the work through the lens of labor theory can allow for analysis precluding moral judgment. Carol Leigh noted that her coining of the term sex work recognized the industry as valid, consensual labor and “acknowledges the work rather than defines [sex workers] by status” (Nagle, 2010, p. 230). The act of sex is still relegated to the privacy of the home in the United States and seeing sex as a chargeable service is largely disapproved. Chapter Two will look at the Christian fundamentalist tendencies of the United States and how morality plays a part in the criminalization of sex work and general contempt for sexual exploration outside of a heterosexual, monogamous partnership. The remainder of Chapter One will examine the various models of the practice of sex work and those implications of criminalization in particular. The priority of the oppression narrative and portrayal of sex workers in American media directly correlate with the United States’ criminalization of sex work.

### *Decriminalization and Other Models*

*Decriminalization.* The decriminalization model is the only model that suggests removing all or most criminal penalties for performing sex work, depending upon the adoption of partial or full decriminalization. Most voluntary sex workers advocate for full decriminalization in which workers would be able to “self-regulate” and receive those same labor and legal protections as other industries, including fair police protection and medical assistance (Kohn, 2017).

*Legalization.* Legalization is defined as the regulation of sex work by government or local authorities. In this model, sex workers would have less authority in dictating their rates (Weitzer, 2012, p. 85). Legalization affords more protections than both the Nordic model and criminalization, but still allows for the exploitation of labor through private corporations and/or government (Balderach, 2005, p. 7).

*The Nordic model.* The Nordic model criminalizes the purchase of sex, rather than the sell. This model deters safe, screened clients from engaging with sex workers. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) reports “there is very little evidence to suggest that any criminal laws related to sex work stop demand for sex or reduce the number of sex workers. Rather, all of them create an environment of fear and marginalization” (UNAIDS, 2012, p. 31).

*Criminalization.* As it suggests, the criminalization model penalizes the selling and purchasing of sexual services, while sexual *entertainment* (such as exotic performances) may remain permissible. The goal of criminalization is likely the abolition of the sex trade, particularly the involuntary selling of sex, yet this approach tends to

exacerbate the dangers of underground, secondary markets and makes working conditions more dangerous for both voluntary and involuntary workers within the sex trade. Sex workers and the buyers of sexual services, often termed “Johns,” may be fined, arrested, or incarcerated depending on local and state laws. Nevada is the only state in the United States that regulates brothel work. Sex is criminalized in all other states (Chateauvert, 2013, p. 5).

### *Sex Work, Stigma, and the Law*

In light of relatively recent policy, the industrialized United States proves to be a sort of anomaly in regard to the country’s stance on sex work. The United States’ criminalization of the practice of sex work mirrors closely to that of Russia, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and various low- or middle-income countries, as opposed to countries like France, New Zealand, Denmark, Sweden, New South Wales, Kazakhstan, and India, where sex work is either decriminalized, legalized, or regulated (Portman, 2018; Wagner, 2018). In *Policing Pleasure: Sex work, Policy, and the State in Global Perspective*, Dewey et al. argue that the United States operates by something termed the “oppression paradigm.” The oppression paradigm, which views sex work through a lens of immorality and exploitation, leads to the construction of the victim narrative and the enforcement of “punitive” regulations, or criminalization (Dewey et al., 2011, p. 28).

### *FOSTA-SESTA*

With the proliferation of the internet and parental concerns about children coming across indecent content, lawmakers rushed to pass the Communications Decency Act (CDA) of 1995, which made it illegal “to knowingly send to or show minors obscene or

indecent content online.” The bill was later amended to include Section 230, which stressed the importance of free speech and responsibility of the user—rather than the internet provider—for user-generated content. Section 230 provided a loophole, where sites like *Backpage*, *Craigslist*, and *Erotic Review* could allow sex workers to safely screen clients online and generate a regular customer base (Cunningham & Kendall, 2011, p. 226).

In April 2018, Congress passed the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) and the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA). These two bills were enacted to reduce the occurrence of sex trafficking by amending Section 230 of the CDA to hold site providers liable for content seen as violating federal trafficking laws. Personal ad pages and entire sites were removed out of publishers’ fear of being prosecuted for third-party ads, leading to more dangerous conditions for both voluntary and involuntary workers within the sex industry as websites like *Backpage* and *Erotic Review* were effectively erased (Blue, 2018; Romano, 2018). A greatly uninformed Congress virtually eliminated the means for sex workers to post customer reviews and warn others of dangerous clients. Rather than considering a non-punitive approach to sex work, House and Senate members used faulty research in supporting their own interpretations of the industry and completely excluded the voices of sex workers from the decision-making process (Kessler, 2018).

### *The Body Count*

Soon after the passing of FOSTA-SESTA, many full-service sex workers were forced back into street-based sex work, where the risk of arrest, assault, and exploitation is exponentially worse (McCombs, 2018; Cunningham & Kendall, 2011, p. 224). In

September of 2018, sex worker Donna Castleberry was shot and killed by unmarked police officer Andrew Mitchell, a death that could have been avoided if she did not need to pursue her work outside of a safer online community (Weiner, 2018). Melisa, an escort from Phoenix, reported pimps as “more aggressive” while Kendall, an escort from Las Angeles, said insufficient screening methods have led to a dodgy client base and lower income. Not only are sex workers impacted by harsher penalties. The families and children of sex workers are affected when median household income suffers and certainly when the profession of a sex-working parent is exposed (Cole, 2018). There are thousands of similar stories across the United States, lower income and arrest being the lesser penalties (Burns, 2018). One study places the increased rate of homicides after FOSTA-SESTA from ten to nearly twenty percent (Cunningham, DeAngelo, & Tripp, 2019, p. 2-3). Sex worker Caty Simon noted that thirteen sex workers in one district alone went missing the same month as the shutting down of Backpage (Simon, 2018).

### *EARN IT Act*

As of March 11, 2020, Senate Bill 3398, also termed the EARN IT Act, was introduced to the Senate Judiciary by Senator Lindsey Graham (“10 U.S. Code”). Established under the guise of constructing a National Commission on Online Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention and developing “best practices” for online content moderators, many sex workers hail this latest act as FOSTA-SESTA 2.0 (Masnick, 2020). Should the bill become law, law enforcement would gain the right to track encrypted messages, putting the privacy and safety of sex workers and even average U.S. citizens at risk.

Few have conducted formal studies into the effects of anti-tracking policies on United States sex workers. There remains hope, however, as California's Democratic Representative Ro Khanna recently proposed the Safe Sex Workers Study Act, a bill that would research further into the impact of FOSTA-SESTA and similar policies on sex workers as well as victims of human sex trafficking (Fingas, 2019).

### *Conditions of Incarceration*

Nearly thirty-thousand women in the United States are currently incarcerated for trading sex. Over eighty percent of incarcerated women are mothers, contributing heavily to the cycle of poverty and imprisonment of marginalized communities. Black, lesbian, bisexual, and trans women are more likely to be incarcerated than women of any other group (Kajstura, 2018). Because marginalized groups like these are predisposed to turn to sex work as they face discrimination in other areas of employment, sex workers are even more at risk (Chateauvert, 2013). One study cited seventeen percent of nearly five-hundred female inmates as having experienced sexual abuse while incarcerated (Blackburn et al., 2008, p. 351). Incarcerated women are also more likely to experience higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depression, and generalized anxiety (Moloney et al., 2009, p. 427-429).

### *Sex Work vs Sexual Exploitation*

During the 1979 conference where Carol Leigh pioneered for sex workers' rights, she noted that there were hardly any perspectives shared from sex working women. The feminist movement of that time had successfully shut out their narratives in favor of the idea that all prostitution was naturally exploitative, whether prostitutes realized their

victimhood or not (Nagle, 2010, p. 227-230). As previously stated, the danger in categorizing all who work in the sex industry as sexually exploited and oppressed victims ironically only augments the vulnerable conditions of the trade. When this narrative works to perpetuate the model of abolition or criminalization, both voluntary and involuntary workers are put at risk. FOSTA-SESTA failed to curb human trafficking, its primary objective, because it attempted to abolish the entire sex trade without a clear understanding of how policy would shape the industry. Since the legislation passed, it has been more difficult for law enforcement to identify instances of human trafficking (Cunningham, DeAngelo, & Tripp, 2019, p. 28). Vulnerable groups like runaway teenagers, migrants, and houseless women are more likely to be targeted by traffickers and tricks (Simon, 2018).

In *Borderline Slavery: Mexico, United States, and the Human Trade*, Moira Murphy-Aguilar, Susan Tiano, and Bonnie Berry distinguish between sex work and the sex trade. While both are illegal markets, the degree of exploitation differs between the two. Decriminalization might actually work to decrease the margin of profit from victims of human trafficking, as cheaper, safer, more regulated services would already be available. According to the authors, the human trade flourishes because many migrant families and individuals are willing to work in high-risk occupations that pay low wages. In turn, they become susceptible to smugglers, who know the complexities of navigating the border and profit from business with traffickers. The some 18,000 annual trafficked victims between the United States and Mexico are different from sex workers in that they are more likely to be working involuntarily, have no way of supporting themselves, and do not have the option to abandon their work due to low wages or high risk. Aguilar,

Tiano, and Berry suggest that a higher supply of legal, voluntary workers would lessen the demand and need for pursuing illegal sex slaves (Murphy-Aguilar, 2012). Alicia Peters' *Responding to Human Trafficking: Sex, Gender, and Culture in the Law* argues that sex trafficking is not the only, nor the predominant, means of exploitation. The American public should broaden their understanding of actual trafficked victims who are being exploited within the United States for cheap labor. Peters claimed that anti-trafficking initiatives can be damaging for sex workers and victims alike (Peters, 2015, p. 21-55).

### *Sex Work and the Media*

Media has an important role to play in shifting society's perception of sex work. Reporters can work to decrease bias by shifting from the use of key words like "prostitute" to "sex worker," or electing to use full names and thereby establishing an identity outside of sex work. Media can distinguish between voluntary sex work and involuntary trafficking in working to quell public disapproval. *Spread: The Best of the Magazine that Illuminated the Sex Industry and Started a Media Revolution* supports the idea that media can have a positive role to play in validating the sex worker experience. Rather than portraying sex workers as murder victims, drug addicts, or "pretty women," media can capture the humanity of those who perform sex work through more personal stories aimed at increasing awareness or celebrating accomplishments (Aimee et al., 2015, p. 368). In her poignant work *Playing the Whore*, Melissa Gira Grant notes that media confines sex workers to "the red light, the bed, the men, the money. This is her everything—until she turns her back on it" (Grant, 2014, p. 60). Media has consistently portrayed sex workers one-sidedly, only validating their experience if they choose to turn

away from their work. Sex-worker-led programs can employ initiatives such as those used by the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP), which provides volunteers who speak on behalf of sex workers to major news outlets on pressing issues regarding sex work (Gaffney, 2019).

### *Conclusion*

Sex work, or the sale of sexual services or entertainment in exchange for resources, is still criminalized in the United States. The language surrounding the definition of sex work, a term coined by Carol Leigh in the late 1970s, is important in shaping society's perception of sex workers. Out of decriminalization, legalization, the Nordic model, and criminalization, the decriminalization model is the only model to remove all or most criminal penalties for performing sex work, granting sex workers the freedoms and protections of other socially acceptable professions. The criminalization of sex work in the United States has many repercussions for sex workers and involuntary members of the sex trade alike, including stigmatization, incarceration, loss of employment, loss of housing, and strains on the family. These penalties were exacerbated by the passing of FOSTA-SESTA legislation in 2018, which amended Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act and ultimately removed sites where sex workers could safely screen clients from the web. The passing of FOSTA-SESTA led to a spike in rates of violence against sex workers and did little to impact trafficking. The media can play a large role in changing societal perceptions of sex workers by reconstructing the outdated "victim" narrative endorsed at the height of second-wave feminism. The larger moral framework in which United States policy operates perhaps has the greatest role in

shaping Americans' attitudes towards sex work. The impact of Christian fundamentalism on sex work and sexual freedom will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Christian Fundamentalism

“Man enjoys the great advantage of having a god endorse the code he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority over women it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being. For the Jews, Mohammedans and Christians among others, man is master by divine right; the fear of God will therefore repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female”  
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1960).

The practice of trading sex in exchange for resources has withstood the tests of time for as long as there has existed the art of trade. The world’s oldest profession has in fact earned its title. Just look at our close cousins the bonobos, great apes who use sex to mitigate tribal disputes, secure good standing among respected group members, and gain protection (Clay et al., 2012, p. 1-7). Even our primal history goes to show the role of sex outside reproduction. Yet, today there remains a crisis. Sex workers around the world face unprecedented stigma. They are often rejected as castaways in many, if not most societies. For many decades the United States has remained an influential democratic and economic power, even on the outset a major champion for the fulfillment of individual human rights. However, the U.S. has continued a disciplinary approach towards restricting sex work, notwithstanding the testimonies of voluntary sex workers and credible evidence that decriminalization and other models are more effective methods of harm reduction. The question remains then, how can a practice have existed for so long only to be condemned and exploited hundreds of thousands of years later?

The answer, in part, lies in the continued existence of age-old power struggles which predate even some of our earliest human ancestors. Fast-forward to today and we can see the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of society struggling to survive

within a white-dominated system of classism and misogyny. Beyond economic gain, sex work in the United States likely remains criminalized due to the country's time-honored Christian roots. While Christianity itself is by no means inherently exclusionary and by tradition calls for love of the Gentile, American Christianity as practiced today marks a culture that is largely unkind to sex workers. The role of the "submissive" wife and significance of purity culture, especially within fundamentalist tradition, have shaped much of the Christian perspective on sex work. Christian ideals have guided a great portion of United States policy (see "FOSTA-SESTA," Chapter One) and so the immorality of the performance of sex work has been prioritized over valuable harm reduction models. Combined with American racism and the disenfranchisement of ethnic minorities, the open expression of sexuality by non-heteronormative women (i.e. a great deal of sex work) is condemned if not essentially rejected by the modern conservative Christian movement (Kajstura, 2018).

A study conducted by the Pew Research Center along with a Baylor University survey suggested that a large portion of Protestant believers today are more likely to have negative perceptions of dissimilar people groups. As of 2017, Christians made up nearly seventy percent of the United States. One quarter of that seventy percent considered themselves Evangelical Protestant, nearly fifteen percent Mainline Protestant, six percent Historically Black Protestant, and over twenty percent Roman Catholic ("Religion in America"). Over three quarters of the participants in Baylor University's religion survey that considered themselves "very religious" felt the United States was either historically a Christian nation or remains a Christian nation today. Evangelical, Mainline, and Historically Black Protestants made up the largest portion of individuals who believed

Muslims were a threat to American religious values and safety, women were less if not at all suited for politics, and opposed those rights of gender queer and non-heteronormative people groups (Baylor Religion Survey, Wave V, 2017, p. 7-27).

With this data in mind, the following chapter will highlight the important role Christian fundamentalism plays in shaping modern sex work by, first, providing a brief background of Christian fundamentalism and, second, highlighting how many conservative beliefs associated with the practice make little room for open acceptance of deviation from Christian norms and expectations. After discussing the implications of fundamentalism on United States' sex workers, the chapter will conclude with a transition towards those effects Christian fundamentalism carries for university students, particularly in regard to the practice of safe sex and consent.

### *Christian Fundamentalism*

Christian fundamentalism came about in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of modernization and the liberalization of conventional theology, tradition that found its roots in the early days of colonial American Puritanism. The rise of new technologies preceded a curiosity to study the Bible in a new light. As the earth was suddenly much older than the mere few thousand years suggested by literal translation of Scripture, some sought to challenge conventional interpretations of the text. In an effort to preserve core Protestant values, some believers adopted the practice of literal scriptural translation and the idea that the Sacred Text was both free from error on moral matters and an accurate measure of both history and science (Bendroth, 2017, p. 2-6; Nelson, 2013). A century later, fundamentalism took hold of the American South. Ideas that opposed fundamentalist values, like the theory of evolution for example, were banned and even

outlawed in some religious and public institutions. While the practice declined throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, fundamentalism found its way back into many institutions in the later 1980s-90s. (Melton & Ernest, 2016). As seen in Brouwer et al.'s *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (2006), Christian fundamentalism experienced a revival, one that perhaps has taken on its own characteristics amidst a contemporary American culture.

In their first chapter, Brouwer et al. give an introduction of the global fundamentalist movement of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The authors work to define fundamentalism as “a form that rivals Islamic radicalism in its scope and is very likely more potent in its cultural influence, precisely because Christianity is a core element of ‘Western civilization’” (Brouwer et al., 2006, p. 2). Stemming from conservative Evangelical Protestantism, fundamentalists believers and values span across many denominations. Many aspects of American fundamentalism in particular make little room for the acceptance of sex workers, much less the tolerance for sex work itself. The mission to evangelize has combined with both a newfound sense of nationalism and a need to Westernize “developing” cultures, altogether creating an intolerance for groups and cultures unlike their own. The idea of the Bible as inerrant justifies the perpetuation of harmful historical values, particularly those that place women as subservient to men. Stringent principles, like the limitation of alcohol and prohibition of sex before marriage, guide the practice of fundamentalism (p. 3). While these beliefs are not essentially negative, the application of fundamentalist ideals can be harmful for the health and wellbeing of sex workers, college students, and believers alike.

American fundamentalism's widespread opposition to liberation theology virtually ensures its prejudice against sex workers. Liberation theology, which arises largely out of Latin America, prioritizes action and social reform, built upon notions of God as one who actively defends the poor and oppressed against their oppressors (Ipsen, 2014, p. 1-7). Christian fundamentalism, on the other hand, excuses inaction in regard to social reform and often refers to wealth as a gift for good standing with God. So, it should come as no surprise that American fundamentalism sometimes embraces a "Prosperity Gospel" which tends to emphasize the disparity between American economic classes as a sign of God's favor upon the rich. By contrast, anyone who falls outside such fortune must be at fault in the eyes of God (Brouwer et al., 2006, p. 20-27).

One example of a fundamentalist Christian institution that denounces liberative approaches to sacred texts and advocates for the adoption of strict fundamentalist practices is the Family Research Council (Kostenberger, 2019). The FRC is a Christian fundamentalist "activist" group known for having adopted a policy of extreme Christian conservatism (Human Rights Campaign, 2014). The organization, supported by many American Christian politicians like Senator Ted Cruz, Rick Santorum, and Mike Huckabee, views marriage as limited between a cisgender, heterosexual couple and lists polygamy, divorce, adultery, homosexuality, and sterility as iniquitous failings rooted in humanity's rebellion against God (Eichler, 2013; Kostenberger, 2019). The FRC, and Christian fundamentalism at large, shows a great deal of irony in many of their views, specifically in their aforementioned encouragement of sexual intimacy between a married, heterosexual couple. For example, Christian fundamentalism, shaped by the practice of literal scriptural translation, seems to completely skip over Paul the Apostle's

understanding of sex. Paul, more concerned with Christ's second coming, only urged sex not as a means of intimacy or pleasure between spouses, but as a way to prevent fornication with partners outside of marriage. Ideally, marriage would be a sexless bond focused on inspiring a husband or wife towards the eternal (Wheeler-Reed, 2017, p. 40-62). In fact, Paul encouraged non-married couples to remain "like himself," unmarried and focused on preparing one's own soul for Christ's return (1 Corinthians: 6-8, NRSV).

If abiding by scripture were truly the aim of fundamentalist Christians, should not *everyone* forgo sex? Yet, sexual pleasure and exploration are perfectly fine, in fact *blessed* by God when between a married man and woman. This more tolerant interpretation of biblical texts seems to show that the Christian fundamentalist's stance on sex work is more concerned with conservative politics, traditional ideas of the family, and women's roles than scriptural inerrancy. That said, studying these beliefs and motivations of fundamentalist Christians and political groups such as the FRC helps to explain how Christianity and fundamentalist traditions influence perceptions of the poor and marginalized, particularly sex workers. Rather than condemn the practice of Christian fundamentalism, studying those implications of fundamentalist tradition on sex workers today can work to construct a successful middle ground between sex workers and more conservative Christians. In this way, the divine right to life could extend to women of color, sex workers, and all marginalized people groups.

### *Implications for Sex Workers*

American Christian fundamentalism as practiced by groups like the FRC leads to a dangerous working environment for sex workers. A historical lack of initiative in pursuing social reform coupled with strict religious policies regarding sex, gender, sexual

orientation, and sexual relations contribute to the stigmatization, incarceration, and death of sex workers who are not able to pursue safe working conditions due to ignorant, fundamentalist-backed public policies like FOSTA-SESTA. Sex work in the United States is often conflated with immorality and less often viewed as a legitimate means of labor. Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians have led the way in openly condemning sexually deviant behavior and advocating abolitionist agendas (Showalter, 2018). This refusal to understand the plight of both voluntary and involuntary sex workers pushes lawmakers into promoting harmful punitive policies that drive both groups further into poverty and unsafe circumstances.

*From the Perspective of a Sex Worker*

In *I Heart Sex Workers: A Christian Response to People in the Sex Trade*, Lia Claire Scholl addresses this “immorality” narrative as harmful to both voluntary and involuntary sex workers and, even more, straying from the teachings and message of Jesus Christ. Scholl, a member of a church in the Southern Baptist convention, once adopted the stance of many conservative Christians. She took on the role of what sex workers term “Captain-Save-a-Ho,” one who attempts to “rescue” sex workers from their “oppression” in a demonstration of good faith (Scholl, 2013, p. 12). Considering the image the Bible sometimes paints of the prostitute (see Proverbs 6:25-26 and Proverbs 29:3) it is little wonder why many Christians might feel called to save sex workers from moral peril. Scholl suggests that “saving” sex workers without first attempting to more fully understand their choice to pursue work in the industry can put sex workers at risk of their freedom and livelihood, and so contradicts Christ’s message of love. If God is repulsed by any person, Scholl suggests, it is the person that refuses to understand their

neighbor, not the sex worker (p. 17). In fact, Jesus Himself taught that prostitutes would enter the Kingdom of God before many of his disciples (Matthew 2:28-32, NRSV). *I Heart Sex Workers: A Christian Response to People in the Sex Trade* mediates between the sex worker and even the fundamentalist Christian by acknowledging the importance of following Christ's message to love one another. In her work, Scholl recognizes this love as offering to sex workers what they need: a spot at the policy table.

Avery Ipsen worked alongside scholars and sex workers in documenting the narratives and concerns of sex workers and their relationship to morality and religion in *Sex Working and the Bible*. She combined those methods of liberation theology and feminist standpoint theory to identify a hermeneutic specifically for sex workers as they attempted to draw connections and form relationships with characters from ancient Christian texts. Ipsen focused on identifying sex-worker-positive interpretations within the Bible through various methods (i.e. the stories of Rahab and Tamar), in which she attempted to surpass traditional, male-dominated, sexually repressive conceptions of sex workers. The author instead passed the role of interpretation onto sex workers themselves, finally allowing a mass of poor, sexually expressive women the chance to be heard. Ipsen proposed that when policymakers invite sex workers and sex work activists to the table to contribute to the dialogue concerning their own work, the resulting activism, policy changes, and even religious outreach efforts would more likely reflect a true and enlightened concern for the safety of sex workers (Ipsen, 2014, p. 1-54).

In *Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work*, journalist Melissa Gira Grant argues in part for the sex work decriminalization model. Seventy percent of street-based sex workers have reported run-ins with police, and thirty percent of that seventy

“threatened with violence” (Grant, 2014, p. 5). Decriminalizing the industry would allow sex workers to report such violence, committed by police officers or otherwise, to law enforcement without worry of being dismissed or serving time in prison. “Inevitably, all of these women face arrest,” Grant remarks when considering those prostitutes “saved” by city police (p. 38). In New York, one transgendered woman was assumed to be a sex worker when police found condoms on her person and was taken into custody. Yet, sex workers are still perceived as the cause of HIV/AIDS transmission (p. 9). The same idea Scholl’s Christian coworkers held of sex workers as “dirty” and “infected” are perpetuated by America’s criminalization of sex work. The oppression paradigm only fits in as much as sex workers being oppressed by law enforcement, policy makers, and Christian do-gooders who report women for the sake of “saving” them.

### *Beyond Stasis: A Solution*

One practical step Christians might take in truly aiding sex workers is to build an understanding of the importance of liberation theology, guided by the needs and desires of the marginalized themselves. Including sex workers in the discussion of sex workers’ rights would not abandon the idea of morality, contrary to what conservative Christian politicians might suggest in their exclusion of voluntary sex workers from public policy. Rather, changing policy to include sex workers would acknowledge their human rights to safety and security, work to reduce violence against women, improve the state of national and global health, and end stigma against those who choose to earn a living through selling sex. Should more conservative Christians forgo the “Captain-Save-a-Ho” mentality and take a back seat, sex-worker-led organizations like SWOP and others could positively impact public policy for the benefit of sex workers. It might also be truer to the

Christian message to allow sex workers a hermeneutic, as Ipsen writes, in which they can see themselves as loved by Jesus Christ and worthy of participation in the Christian Church (Ipsen, 2014, p. 21-45).

### *Fundamentalist Christian Universities*

The strict prohibition on sex before marriage, restriction of divinely ordained sexual relations to married, heterosexual partners, and relegation of sex to the private sphere does not solely lead to stigma against sex workers. Many students of fundamentalist Christian universities (FCUs), or conservative Christian universities that have adopted one or more practices of Christian fundamentalism, are also negatively affected by university policies (i.e. conduct codes and/or elusive practices restricting the occurrence of student sexual relations) that work to limit and even dictate the sexuality of their students. The final portion of this chapter will address how both the explicit and implicit policies of several leading FCUs—including, but not limited to, Baylor University, Bob Jones University, Pensacola Christian College, Cedarville University, Wheaton College, Ozark University, and Patrick Henry College—work to suppress sexual activity, behavior, and expression among university students.

These institutions have historically neglected to establish best practices and rules regarding consent and sexual boundaries, exposing students to both an increased risk of sexual assault, shame, guilt, and mental stress (Anderson, 2014). By acknowledging sex only insofar as it applies to the fundamentalist Christian hermeneutic (that is to say, between a married man and woman), FCUs actively rebuke or ignore the reality of student sexual relations on campus and so too become inept at appropriately managing cases of sexual assault. It is necessary to carefully examine the practices of conservative

Christian universities for several reasons. With a large number of American citizens adhering to Christianity, stressing the importance of consent and respect at an institutional level could help in shifting their perspective from one which condemns non-standard yet healthy sexual practices to one of tolerance, if not acceptance. Studying FCUs through the lens of consent culture also works to call out the wrongdoings of administrators and faculty who have jeopardized the safety of their students in an effort to spare the religious image of prominent universities. Victims of sexual abuse and harassment already have a hard time sharing their stories. Their difficulty is only exacerbated through the silencing and/or shaming of many FCU officials (Joyce, 2014).

### *The Problem*

The Baylor sexual assault scandal—*scandal* being the key word, no doubt the university’s history of sexual abuse extends much farther back—began in 2012 with an allegation against football player Tevin Elliott. Several allegations against university football players, student leaders, and faculty followed, initiating Pepper Hamilton LLC’s 2015 review into Baylor’s response to Title IX-related issues (Chavez, 2018). Further investigation concluded the university had mishandled and attempted to conceal instances of campus sexual assault, jeopardizing institutional accreditation and public trust in the university’s ability to maintain student safety (Ericksen, 2016; Morris, 2019). Sadly, there are many similar occasions where FCUs like Baylor have mishandled, silenced, and perpetuated on-campus sexual assault. For instance, in 2003, Pensacola Christian College (PCC) expelled one female student after her boyfriend at the time drug her into a construction site and raped her. Doing what many victims of sexual assault are encouraged to do, the student reported her rapist. Rather than face disciplinary action,

however, the victim's boyfriend proceeded to graduate while she was forced to leave the university for "fornication" and disobeying an earlier "contract" required by the university to adhere to school policy: that is, abstinence. Nine years—and many a covered up allegation of sexual misconduct—later, one male student was also expelled by PCC faculty after he reported being gang raped in his university dorm (Clark, 2014).

Not only did PCC grossly mishandle these cases of sexual abuse. They neglected to care for and maintain the physical and spiritual wellbeing of their students, placed fault with those victims of assault, equated being raped with consensual sex, prioritized sexual purity over the safety of their students, and made an official statement—since removed from public record—that the university upheld the law, among other failings.<sup>1</sup> To explain the devastating psychological trauma such neglect would likely cause is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, such incompetent and malicious behavior should not be disregarded. Former students of Bob Jones University, Patrick Henry College, and Cedarville University have shared similar stories of gross injustices on the party of their "Christian" universities. Students who report abuse are made to assume they are at fault through leading questions, such as questions of clothing choice or alcohol consumption (Wyler, 2014). Former pupils of Bob Jones University reported having been told to "deal with your own sin" when coming forward with accusations of sexual assault (Mintz, 2014). Up until those necessary alterations and amendments to university policy, Baylor University continued to threaten repercussions during new-student orientations for

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<sup>1</sup> Article removed from public archives. See <http://www.pcci.edu/Response.html>.

students who were caught consuming alcohol on- or off-campus.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, their reassurance that students were not to blame should they fall victim to sexual abuse under the influence seemed worthless.

Over the years and many scandals later, accreditation commissions pressed many of these universities to alter their faulty policies and include detailed measures for dealing with Title-IX related cases. For example, since 2017, Baylor University has actively adopted a more comprehensive definition of “consent,” if students are willing to read the nearly 100-page annual security report or manage to comprehend the “Consent-Is-Like-Tea” video showing (Dreher, 2018; Reed & Fritts, 2018). Baylor University, Cedarville University, Wheaton College, Bob Jones University, and others have replaced many administrators and faculty members accused in some manner of fostering a hostile campus environment that discourages students from speaking openly on university failings. Title IX offices have been fortified with a greater number of newly-trained staff to mitigate crises and some universities have even begun a more open dialogue on consent (Dallas, 2019). That said, there remain one-too-many hoops to jump through in identifying the stance of these universities on student sexuality and sexual intimacy. Why? Put simply, many FCUs refuse to discuss the taboo. That is, they don’t like to talk about students wanting and/or having sex (Denker, 2019).

While the suggestion to not have sex may be implied in conduct codes available to the student body at large, other even more obscure guidelines work to enforce Baylor’s Student Conduct Policy. In training to become dorm community leaders (CLs), students

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<sup>2</sup> Article removed from public archives. See <https://www.baylor.edu/lariatarchives/news.php?action=story&story=38470>.

preparing to guide upcoming freshmen through the perils of their first year are given many worksheets during “strategy meetings,” where administrators teach CLs how to navigate difficult situations that may arise within on-campus residence halls. One such worksheet, which cannot be found through a simple search on Baylor’s website, instructs community leaders on how to discourage sexual intimacy within resident dorms. Upon hearing a resident engaging in sex, CLs are to knock on the resident’s door, instruct the resident and their partner(s) to clothe themselves, enter the room and separate those involved, and fill out a report documenting the student’s behavior.

Seeing as how such activity goes against the university expectation of students to behave in a manner according to biblical teaching (“Statement on Human Sexuality,” 2015), having sex either on- or off-campus is regarded as a violation of the Student Conduct Policy and warrants disciplinary action (“III. Sexual Misconduct,” 2009). Perhaps even more interesting than this intervention strategy, however, is a conundrum faced by many CLs put in charge of upholding student conduct. Upon hearing the news that some students have engaged or are engaging in sexual activity within their dorms, many CLs are unsure if the circumstances of their activity warrant disciplinary intervention. One community leader noted, “The worksheet only says we should intervene when students are having sex. So a lot of us don’t know what to do when, say, we hear students are giving blowjobs in their dorms. Are they technically ‘having sex?’ What do we do then?”<sup>3</sup>

The confusion exhibited by Baylor dorm community leaders as to what sex really is extends to many students throughout the university and FCUs at large. In 2016, *The*

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with a former Baylor dorm community leader. Student requested their identity remain anonymous.

*Baylor Lariat*, Baylor University's student news publication, issued one article titled "Let's Talk About Sex." The author, who chose to remain anonymous, said that on the subject of sex, Baylor was like "an awkward teen" that avoided speaking bluntly on the reality of sexual intimacy. They recognized the difficulty of finding resources on-campus—like information on birth control, STIs, and healthy sexual relationships—outlining safe sexual practices. "In reality, students are having sex. Whether it's biblical or not, it's happening, and Baylor shouldn't pretend otherwise." The article goes to show that students not only *want* access to such resources, they also feel their university is failing to provide them. "There's a fine line between encouraging behavior that contradicts Christian principles and encouraging healthy behaviors," they write. "The university should by no means abandon its traditional values, but there should also be some concern for the sexual health of Baylor students" (*Baylor Lariat*, 2016).

Aside from leaving students in the dark in regard to safe and consensual sex, the policies of conservative Christian universities who choose to adopt certain fundamentalist ideologies also work to impede on the sexual expression of their students and faculty. A former student of Ozark University reported that university administrators expelled students not only for having sex, but for identifying as gay (Mintz, 2014). In 2016, gay Christian blogger Julie Rodgers told her own story to *Time* magazine. Rodgers was hired in 2014 by Wheaton College in an effort to "support" sexual minorities on their campus. Despite the desperate need of students to have someone like Rodgers in which to confide, Wheaton consistently encouraged her to remain quiet on matters of the LGBTQ community. Ultimately, Rodgers's time at the college had not been what she nor Wheaton administrators had hoped, as they had pressured her to sign a code of conduct

stating sexual fidelity was restricted to marriage alone—a relationship that could only be between a man and woman—and encouraged that she would find “healing” in her struggle of identity, one in which she stood firm (Rodgers, 2016). In letting Rodgers go, Wheaton showed a fundamental misunderstanding of the struggle of their LGBTQ faculty and students and so too abandoned an invaluable student resource.

These universities have failed their students in more ways than one. They have prioritized aligning student behavior with conservative fundamentalist ideology over creating a safe campus environment. Their quieting and shutting out of those who have departed from their idea of a proper Christian student has demonstrated their failure in reconciling Christian fundamentalist practice—one that has disproportionately suppressed female and gender non-conforming persons—with the security of university attendees (Joyce, 2014). While Christian fundamentalism itself might not be entirely harmful or wrong, administrators of FCUs have discovered the difficulty of observing strict fundamentalist practices while encouraging the pursuit of a well-rounded liberal arts education.

#### *Non-fundamentalist Christian Universities*

The discrimination of LGBTQ students, sexual harassment, and sexual assault is not restricted to those campuses of conservative Christian universities. According to the National Institute of Justice, alcohol use, sorority memberships, numerous sexual partners, freshman or sophomore status, day of the week, and off-campus parties were the top risk factors associated with the likelihood of the occurrence of sexual assault (“Factors That Increase Sexual Assault Risk”). As FCUs have historically held more stringent policies in regard to alcohol consumption and on- or off-campus parties, many

studies cite these institutions as generally having lower rates of sexual violence (“College Sexual Assault Statistics of Top Ranked Schools,” 2016; Shellnut, 2018). However, several studies, like Nick Anderson’s “Sex Offenses on U.S. College Campuses,” note the warning of many experts, who believe that a lower reporting does not necessarily correlate to increased student safety (Anderson, 2014). Merely, students of universities with a lower number of reports of sexual assault have just that, a lower number of students reporting sexual violence.

The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) cites only twenty percent of female student victims ages eighteen through twenty-four as having reported an instance of sexual abuse to law enforcement (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, 2015). Imagine what that statistic would look like at a university in which sex and alcohol consumption were viewed as immoral and those who experienced sexual violence while participating in such activities were treated as responsible parties to abuse. It is likely that any campus where those aforementioned factors are present is more prone to experiencing higher rates of sexual violence, Christian or not (“Factors That Increase Sexual Assault Risk;” Anderson, 2014). As seen in the practices and policies of many FCUs, the consequences of reporting sexual assault or harassment have far outweighed the advantages of reporting. While FCUs tend to boast over their restrictive policies on alcohol consumption, Greek-life activities, and even sex, knowing that these factors are associated with an increased risk of sexual violence, their silence on subjects regarding moderation in consumption and safe sexual practices exacerbate those instances of sexual assault on their own campuses (Tarrant, 2010).

Not all Evangelical Christian universities are inept at maintaining the wellbeing of their students in regard to sex and sexuality. It is not the absence of Christianity that allows a higher institution to adequately care for their students, but the presence of open dialogue regarding sexual identity, gender-based violence, and sexual health. Many Christian universities, even those that might have once adopted one or several aspects of Christian fundamentalism, have begun to more plainly define sexual misconduct, harassment, and consent not only between heterosexual partners, but non-heteronormative partners as well. Iliff School of Theology, Pepperdine University, Wake Forest University, and Duke are just a handful of many Christian universities that have expanded upon these definitions and so began a more frank discussion of the “taboo.” In an easy-to-access online format, each institution clearly defines sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, non-consensual sexual intercourse, and exploitation under their sexual misconduct policies (compared to lengthy annual safety reports).

According to Iliff, consent is “clear, knowing, and voluntary words or actions that give permission for specific sexual activity.” Iliff School of Theology takes firm disciplinary action against those who violate these terms, including withholding diplomas, revoking degrees, and notating transcripts (Iliff School of Theology). In the introduction to their Sexual Misconduct Policy, Pepperdine affirms the inherent dignity of all their students, regardless of gender or sexual expression:

“Pepperdine University affirms that all members of our community are created in the image of God and therefore should be treated with dignity and respect. Our University code of ethics states that we do not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of any status or condition protected by applicable federal or state law. Further, we respect the inherent worth of each member of the community and do not engage in any form of harassment. We follow the profound truth found in the Golden Rule, ‘In everything do to others as you would have them do to you’ (Matthew 7:12)” (“Sexual Misconduct”).

Christian universities like these interpret Christ's message in such a way as to support all students and maintain an honest and open conversation in regard to violations of sexual assault. Disciplinary action is taken only against faculty and students who commit acts of sexual harassment or violence, rather than against victims or even students engaging in sexual activity. In this way, a more supportive culture embraces students and encourages them to report threats to their wellbeing. They hold the idea that a safe university campus is not one with few reports of violence, but one that encourages students to come forward without reproach should they experience hostility.

### *Conclusion*

To be clear, this thesis is not arguing that the stance taken by Christian fundamentalists, Baylor University, and other FCUs highlighting the sanctity of fidelity in marriage is itself wrong or malicious. What is malicious is the way in which these institutions have implemented policies that shame students for deviating from indirect conduct codes and have concealed the full reality of on-campus sexual assault and harassment. The conversation on safe sexual practices should not end in high school sex-ed classes, a lesson many students of private, Christian schools already fail to provide. FCUs could play an important role in teaching students about healthy sexual relationships and consent. The practice of silence observed by Baylor and other conservative Christian universities only increases the likelihood that students would enter into sexual relationships more naïve and/or place trust in intimate partners who lack a proper understanding of consent or respect of boundaries.

Following the example of Iliff School of Theology, Pepperdine, Wake Forest, Duke, and others, FCUs could establish a university environment where victims of harassment and sexual violence feel safe enough to come forward with their stories. Whether or not instances of sexual assault occur more often on non-religious campuses is no reason to diminish the reality of sexual violence within FCUs. Starting an open dialogue on the taboo workings of sexual intimacy on these campuses might place blame where it belongs, on the perpetrator alone, and construct a culture wherein sexual violence is no longer tolerated. The following chapter will tie together sex work, Christian fundamentalism, and consent by analyzing the ways in which sex workers build personal boundaries, maintain consent throughout services provided, and practice caution all while acknowledging the larger spectrum of sexual pleasure. In following these examples of sex workers, Christian fundamentalists and FCUs alike could work to adopt more wholesome and supportive policies based on Christ's message of love that prioritize the wellbeing of individuals over maintaining a false image.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Consent Culture

“I believe that as negotiation and consent become more standard parts of our sexual vocabulary, that more safety will be created to discuss these gray areas without automatically feeding backlash sentiment that would deny the reality and tragedy of rape”  
(Nagle, 1997, p. 14).

#### *What is Consent Culture?*

The subject of consent has received considerably more attention in recent years with the public recognition of the #MeToo movement and those accusations of sexual misconduct against many well-known political and celebrity figures (Corey, 2017; Scott, 2017; Glamour, 2019). As survivors of sexual assault and victims of harassment have gained the strength to come forward, more men seem to show signs of apprehension concerning the appropriateness of particular comments or physical touches when interacting with women work colleagues or friends (Bono, 2018; Reece, 2018; Mahdawi, 2019; Zacharek, 2019). The consequences of ignoring intimate boundaries finally seem to be catching up to perpetrators of sexual violence. Yet, difficulties remain in this new era of consent. Consent culture—a culture built upon the understanding of consent, the normalizing of asking for consent, and the respect of every individual’s autonomy and personal boundaries (Rosales, 2019)—has clashed with a modern society shaped by patriarchal traditions. From the perspective of the privileged and respected heterosexual man, historically there has been little need to define consent. Men equated consent with the satisfaction of their own sexual desires rather than a mutual agreement between themselves and their partner (Schulhofer, 2016, p. 671). With the dawn of #MeToo, it is

becoming especially important to clearly define and understand consent in pursuing sexual intimacy, lest there be an accidental breach of an individual's personal sexual boundaries.

Chapter Three will work toward building this definition by highlighting consent as outlined in U.S. legal code, the policies of both fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist Christian universities, and, finally, as practiced throughout the spectrum of voluntary sex work. In the same way one would seek, say, medical advice from a physician who has gained extensive experience within the medical profession, the remainder of this thesis seeks to understand consent by evaluating the practices of sex experts who perform sexual services and entertainment for a living and so know the importance of respecting boundaries. In order to begin shifting from a campus culture that perpetuates rape and other forms of sexual violence to one that values the wellbeing of its students and faculty, FCUs and others must recognize the necessity of facilitating an open discussion on sexual health and safety within intimate relationships. In other words, FCUs and the nation at large can learn how to construct a culture of consent by respecting the long-thought taboo profession of sex work. This chapter will conclude with three major lessons FCUs can take away from strippers, BDSM workers, webcam performers, and full-service sex workers to improve their own policies surrounding safe and consensual sexual intimacy to better foster the care and wellbeing of their students.

### *Consent and The Law*

U.S. Code § 920 defines consent as a “freely given agreement to the conduct at issue by a competent person.” According to section 920(g)(7), consent to sex cannot be assumed by lack of resistance, whether verbal or physical, it cannot be gained by the use

of threat or force, is not determined by previous sexual experiences or style of clothing, and cannot be rendered by someone who is sleeping, unconscious, or otherwise “incompetent” (10 USC § 920(g)(7)). In the United States, the penalty for perpetrating sexual assault ranges by individual state law. The minimum time served for a guilty conviction in New York, for example, is one year and the maximum seven. Federal law sets the maximum penalty at twenty years (“Sexual Assault Sentencing and Penalties,” 2016).

### *Consent Within University Campuses*

As discussed in Chapter Two, university policies—especially those of conservative Christian universities—governing student sexual behavior have much room for improvement. In addressing the educational needs of their students, many of whom have a greater degree of freedom in university than they have ever exercised before, higher institutions must not fail to consider the sexual health and wellbeing of their students. Neglecting to acknowledge the reality of sexual intimacy between students through obscure conduct codes and a lack of comprehensive resources on sexual health leaves them exposed to sexual harassment, STIs, sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence, all of which are barriers to student learning. Conservative Christian universities who take on a punitive approach to any on- (or off-) campus sexual activity effectively show students that they do not have full authority over their own bodies and, ultimately, that healthy sexual behavior is not okay.

*Fundamentalist Christian Universities.* With #MeToo, the widespread use of social media, and the well-known history of many conservative Christian universities, the

American public has pressured most FCUs into matching up their own sexual conduct policies more closely to federal guidelines (Poff, 2020; “Set the Standard”). Baylor University includes the following definition of consent in their annual safety report:

“Consent is the voluntary, informed, and freely given agreement, through words and/or actions, to participate in mutually agreed-upon sexual acts. Consensual sexual activity happens when each partner willingly and affirmatively chooses to participate” (“2019 Annual Fire Safety and Security Report–Baylor University”).

While this definition is certainly a step in the right direction, universities can expand upon this idea of consent as “affirmative” and imitate the practice of sex workers—like BDSM workers for example—in incorporating body language, facial expressions, and safe words into their conception of consent. In tandem with communication and checking in on the wellbeing of their partner(s), individuals could use these aforementioned cues to determine whether or not they should continue sexual intercourse. Students who enter into conservative Christian universities with very little idea of how to physically have sex are much less likely to know how to communicate personal boundaries. Without providing access to resources that teach students how to engage in safe and healthy sexual behavior, universities leave students who do—and inevitably will—decide to pursue sex naïve concerning sexual health, safety, and consent (O’Neill, 2016).

*Non-fundamentalist Christian Universities.* In addition to their definition of consent, which otherwise differs little from that of Baylor University, Iliff School of Theology notes that “‘No’ always means ‘No,’ and ‘Yes’ may not always mean ‘Yes.’ Anything but a clear, knowing and voluntary consent to any sexual activity is equivalent to a ‘no’” (Iliff School of Theology). This recognition is incredibly necessary in encouraging students to be concerned with their partner’s safety and comfort. Duke

university offers explicit examples of non-consensual sexual acts. In their sexual misconduct policy, for instance, examples of sexual harassment include: “continued unwelcome questioning about intimate or personal matters, unwelcome touching, or other physical acts of a sexual nature, severe, persistent, or pervasive comments or jokes of a sexual nature, and sending emails that contain extreme or persistent sexual messages, images, or language.” Duke also suggests to clarify willingness to continue sexual activity if there remains any ambiguity in relation to consent (“Student Sexual Misconduct Policy And Procedures: Duke’s Commitment To Title IX”). These policies illustrate a greater understanding of consent as complex and recognize the importance of a comprehensive discussion of expectations and limitations between sexual partners.

### *Sex Work and Consent*

The most vital facet of satisfactory sex is mutual consent. Sex workers are especially aware of the importance in obtaining consent as their entire profession hinges upon it. Not only does the respect of the intimate boundaries of clientele work toward establishing comfort and satisfaction, it is necessary for the mental and physical wellbeing of all parties involved. For sex workers, establishing consent through open and honest communication works to reduce unwanted sexual advances (Davina, 2017, p. 62-64).

### *Sex Workers and Consent Culture*

Considering that sex and sexual intimacy are major components of their profession, sex workers know consent perhaps better than most. In ensuring that clients feel comfortable expressing their private desires, consent is maintained throughout bookings, and the boundaries of both client and provider are respected, sex workers

cultivate a culture of consent in which the diversity and complexity of sexuality is recognized and expressed. Sex workers and their customers exist across the full spectrum of human sexual identity, orientation, and expression. They are not always heteronormative nor gender-conforming and so, as boundaries shift and fantasies are explored, sex workers must know how to work within the comfort zones of clientele in fostering pleasure. While by no means an exhaustive list, the following facets of sex work demonstrate the ways in which sex workers promote consent and the open acceptance of sexual expression.

### *Strippers*

Depending upon local ordinance, whether or not a club chooses to sell alcohol, club rules, and client expectations, strippers employ a variety of means to define and defend their own personal boundaries. A dancer who works at a topless bar, for example, might draw their boundaries differently than one who works at a fully nude club. The level of intimate touching allowed between dancer and patron also varies by venue. Some gentlemen's bars strictly prohibit clients from touching outside of those same areas deemed appropriate in a typical workplace setting (i.e. arms, shoulders, hands, and even back are okay). Others prohibit this same kind of touch from clients while more intimate touching on the part of the dancer is permitted. Still others might discourage intimate touching in theory, yet practice a policy of looking the other way, if not encouraging dancers to earn tips by whatever methods they choose to exercise. Regardless of club policies, most every dancer has personal rules and procedures in place to earn money safely and comfortably within their own limitations (Lombard & Schwartz, 2015).

While the law and society at large have begun to debunk the myth that one's clothing (or lack thereof) is synonymous to person's—particularly a woman's—consent to intimate comments or touches, some strip-club patrons seem to perpetuate this thought that dancers, by virtue of being a stripper, want and/or deserve to have their boundaries pushed (Piper, 2017). While many clubs have rules in place to protect their employees/contractors from aggressive clients (i.e. house-moms, managers, and/or bouncers that enforce club rules and zero-tolerance or “three-strike” policies), many dancers have their own methods in place for mitigating conflict while securing tips from even the sleeziest clients.

Like any fast-paced sales job, strippers must be quick-thinking and creative in controlling as best they can how client interactions go. While many dancers are direct in the enforcement of their boundaries and will outright tell a client “yes” or “no” to particular requests, others will guide conversation with comments like “I love when you do x, y, z...” or, “It turns me on when...” Strippers also use body language in deterring their client from pushing limits. If these methods don't work, dancers know to take payment beforehand and walk away if patrons make them uncomfortable. Aside from affirmative consent, strippers practice consent in a variety of ways. They show that consent can be expressed in sensual yet expressive comments, is not conferred via their profession or clothing style, and can also be determined through body language. Dancers also practice a wide range of harm reduction measures should they choose to engage in sexual acts at work. For example, they will avoid the transfer of bodily fluids via kissing or penetration and bring their own condoms to use should they perform either oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

## *BDSM*

While not entirely immune to those struggles many sex workers face when engaging with clients face to face, the giving and receiving of consent is especially emphasized in BDSM, making this line of work a particularly unique domain in which to study the construction of intimate boundaries. Similarly to some manifestations of full-service sex work, bondage, domination/discipline, and sadomasochism require an open dialogue about limitations and consent to very specific activities prior to a session with a dominatrix or BDSM worker. Both client and dominatrix must discuss the things they are and are not comfortable doing as well as the ways in which the client will express non-consent. For example, dominatrix Yin Q noted in an interview with VICE magazine that in BDSM, “struggle, cries of pain, tears, and even saying “no” may not be the flag to stop—thus safe words and ways to check in should be negotiated. In “vanilla” sex, all of those indicators should stop the sexual interaction” (Retta, 2019). BDSM goes beyond the idea of consent as only “yes” or “no” to incorporate non-verbal expressions and so builds upon the traditional notions of affirmative consent as the best means of avoiding the breaking of personal boundaries. Like other forms of sex work, BDSM confirms that consent requires practice and a frank conversation about expectations from intimate partners.

Despite gaining more public recognition thanks to movies like *Fifty Shades of Grey*, James Franco’s *KinK*, Richard Levine’s *Submission*, and the popular Netflix series *Bonding*, it was not long ago when BDSM was seen as perhaps an even more taboo subdivision of sex work (Burton, 2014; Holmgren, 2017). Because the performance of power is often left to the sex workers themselves, BDSM workers have a large hand in

shaping their own boundaries. This said, in order to maintain their client base, BDSM performers must learn to abide by the wants and fantasies of their clientele while maintaining an atmosphere of understanding and safety. This can only be possible with a completely honest discussion about the expectations of both client and dominatrix. This manner of candid, open dialogue can be adopted by universities in allowing student concerns to be heard regarding questions of sexual health and safety. Shaming students for questioning their sexual wellbeing, orientation, and identity are common mistakes FCUs make that cultivate an environment of guilt, secrecy, and the trauma that comes with the inability to express one's feelings (Noble, 2016).

### *Webcam Performers*

Without face to face interaction, many webcam performers and teleworkers negotiate with clients from the safety of their own homes or workspaces. However, this does not provide immunity to the dangers of predatory customers. In the age of technology and harmful policies like FOSTA-SESTA or the EARN It Act, online sex workers must be careful to avoid being outed by dissatisfied clients, family, or friends and have security in place to protect their private information online. While webcam performers might not experience those same kinds of breaches of consent they might should they be providing an in-person service, clients still break boundaries in threatening to expose, harass, or stalk performers and/or leak personal content online. The work of webcam performers demonstrates the need for more inclusive laws that protect the online privacy of sex workers and others who seek to foster intimate relationships on the web.

### *Full-Service Sex Workers*

Of the many variations of sex work, full-service sex work perhaps provides both workers and clients a greater opportunity to practice the giving and receiving of consent. The physical interaction involved in full-service work necessitate that boundaries be stated clearly. Building a reliable and safe client base requires that escorts, prostitutes, and other full-service workers satisfy the needs of customers while ensuring their own safety and that of future clients. For instance, sex workers must enforce rules that minimize the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. To do this, many providers avoid unprotected vaginal, anal, and even oral sex and/or thoroughly check for any open wounds, sores, or cuts before engaging with clients. A few popular myths that play into the stigmatization of full-service sex workers paint prostitutes as “dirty,” refusing to use protection, and sleeping with any customers that pay. The sad truth is that most providers do not have the luxury of acting so recklessly, as many non-sex workers might. Sex workers who are known not to use protection likely receive little reliable work and run the risk of being reported to authorities (Pagan, 2016; Davina, 2017, p. 47).

The importance of gaining the consent of a client is often an easier task for full-service providers than ensuring that no client breaches their own intimate boundaries. Due to the United States’ criminalization of sex work, prostitutes, escorts, and other providers of illegal sexual services have little recourse to turn towards should their boundaries be violated. For this reason, the decriminalization of sex work is a necessary step in ensuring that all sex workers can report instances of harassment and sexual assault. Online screening tools and sex work communities are an important means by

which sex workers can establish the identity and history of clientele and determine whether or not a client would be respectful of boundaries.

### *Lessons to FCUs*

#### *Lesson One: Talk About Sex*

The first and perhaps most important lesson fundamentalist Christian universities can take away from sex work is this: *talk about sex*. Foster a campus in which it is not only okay to speak out about sex, but one where administrators will listen to students enthusiastically. Have an open and accessible discussion about defining sexual boundaries, healthy relationships, maintaining sexual health, and the validity in sexual diversity. Allow for the charter of groups that would be inclusive of various gender identities and expressions, similar to the full spectrum of sex work (Najmabadi, 2019). Follow the example of full-service sex workers and dominatrices in actively facilitating a conversation in a supportive environment. In contrast to the “supportive environments” boasted in many a fundamentalist Christian university policy (“III. Sexual Misconduct,” 2009; “Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention”; “Shame List,” 2020; Noble, 2016), an actively supportive environment is one in which students feel safe to report violations of sexual boundaries, sexual health concerns, and ask open questions regarding sexual identity and orientation without fear of backlash.

Provide students with helpful tips in avoiding as best they can unsafe sexual relationships. Offer condoms in health and counselling centers as well as other on-campus locations. Universities can encourage a culture of consent in maintaining total confidentiality with their students unless state or federal law demands otherwise. In the

same way full-service and BDSM workers encourage clients to feel safe in sharing their intimate desires, universities can allow students the opportunity to explore their sexuality safely by providing abundant resources on sexual health in public and discreet locations on-campus as a way to both normalize healthy sexual expression and serve students who are more hesitant in articulating their concerns.

Both faculty and students of FCUs can learn many valuable tips and harm reduction methods by studying the personal safety techniques of strippers, dominatrices, full-service sex workers, and really any form of sex worker who visits with clients in-person. For example, strippers must be cautious in protecting their personal boundaries, especially at bars or clubs where customers are allowed to physically touch dancers. In securing tips, sex workers must find creative means to deter clients from pushing their boundaries and/or putting them at risk of losing their job. Rather than approach a customer rudely or in a manner that jeopardizes one's possibility of receiving a tip, sex workers first get to know their customer through small talk as a way of assessing their demeanor. If their client seems excessively rude or aggressive, a dancer might decide to pursue another customer. Should a dancer feel uncomfortable after already deciding to give a private dance, they encourage clients not to exceed limitations with positive phrases (i.e. "I'm attracted to a man who does...", "I like a man who listens to me," etc.) that work to either distract from or dissuade unwanted behavior (Piper, 2017).

With a campus culture that promotes healthy sexual habits, students can incorporate some of these tips into their own intimate encounters. Students can question—either straightforwardly or in a roundabout way—the personalities and preferences of potential sexual partners before approaching more intimate situations. Should they feel

uncomfortable in an already intimate encounter, students can practice encouraging statements that promote a certain action or type of behavior. In positive and healthy sexual encounters, it is often helpful for one partner to be directed in their manner of behavior. This said, these encouragements do not put any responsibility on the victims of sexual abuse for not saying or doing any specific thing. Rather, these tips from sex workers are to guide consenting partners through the ups and downs of sexual intimacy.

Another practice students can take away from studying the work of sex work is personal safety. Like strippers, BDSM works, and full-service sex workers, it is necessary for the health of both partners to practice safe sex. Sex workers use condoms, contraception, and even other physical methods to reduce the risk of pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases. Like sex workers who choose to engage in unprotected sex, students can thoroughly examine both themselves and their partners in ensuring there are no cuts, sores, or open wounds which would increase the likelihood of contracting STDs. Similar to sex workers, students should receiving STD testing before each new sexual partner and inform partners of any infections that could be passed on or put the health of their partner at risk (Davina, 2017, p. 46-47). Students might also better reduce the risk of STD transmission by avoiding the exchange of fluids via saliva and/or semen through kissing or unprotected anal, oral, and/or vaginal sex.<sup>4</sup>

### *Lesson Two: Clearly Define Consent*

In tandem with facilitating a public discourse on sex, universities can more clearly define consent by first making policies on sex and consent accessible to students (no more tea videos) outside of protracted annual reports. Include policies on consent within

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<sup>4</sup> These statements are not meant to replace/contradict the advice of certified medical professionals.

sexual conduct codes in all modes accessible by students (i.e. policy handbooks, syllabi, online conduct policies, etc.). It should go without saying that higher institutions which expect to foster a culture of consent must illustrate consent themselves. In other words, universities that are working toward affirming the autonomy and right to consent of their students must stop invading their intimate boundaries. Take this one from webcam performers and teleworkers. Give students the privacy to explore their sexuality safely without fear of public exposure or shame.

In practicing consensual sex, students can imitate the techniques of BDSM workers. Should one partner receive pleasure in initiating particular behaviors or feeling as if they are in control, they can disclose this to their partner beforehand and identify a way in which they can perform safely to the comfort of their partner (Nagle, 1997, p. 145-156). Students can also learn from the work of webcam performers in maintaining their online safety. If students wish to send intimate or explicit material online, they can be thorough in their examination of the rules and regulations of online platforms in regards to sending explicit content (Voynovskaya, 2020). Students can also practice following boundaries in first asking the potential receiver of such material beforehand if they are okay receiving explicit images or messages. In this respect, it might be helpful for students to know that over thirty states have laws against sending nonconsensual sexually explicit content online. If they ever find themselves in a situation where their private content was leaked, students could be entitled to legal assistance (Hanna, 2017).

### *Lesson Three: Let There Be (Appropriate) Consequences*

The third and final lesson universities can take away from sex work arises more from the current state of sex work than the ways in which providers perform. Due to the

criminalization of most forms of sex work in the U.S., sex workers are often marginalized and even incarcerated for performing sex in exchange for necessary resources. The issue at hand is the criminalization of consensual sex between adults. In their punitive approach toward the sex industry, local, state, and federal authorities often punish sex workers and clients who are having consensual sex rather than arresting clients who commit acts of violence against providers of sexual services (Bazelon, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2019). In much the same way, fundamentalist Christian universities often shame healthy sexual behavior over discouraging unsafe or nonconsensual sex (Sellers, 2017).

In the case of on-campus sexual assault, universities have many times shifted the blame of sexual harassment or violence from the perpetrator to the victim (Clark, 2014; Wyler, 2014; Rodgers, 2016). While there is a need for consequences in denouncing unacceptable behavior, penalties should be directed toward those persons who violate intimate personal boundaries. Universities must do a better job in fairly and effectively condemning students and faculty who actively ignore consent by recognizing such harmful actions. Students found guilty of perpetrating violence should face appropriate consequences: warnings, probations, suspension, expulsion, and/or transcript notations (Ilf School of Theology). On the opposite end, universities must also encourage healthy sexual behavior if they are to better protect the safety of their students.

### *Conclusion*

Sex work in the United States remains a highly contested subject of sexual ethics and morality. In the same manner, the topics of sexuality and consent remain taboo within fundamentalist Christian universities. The refusal of FCUs to acknowledge student sexual intimacy has created a harmful environment of silence for survivors of sexual

assault, victims of sexual harassment, and all students who face questions regarding healthy sexual behavior, boundary setting, and sexual identity, to name a few subjects. Because of their experience with sex and the taboo, sex workers can provide invaluable instruction on creating a culture of consent. Strippers, BDSM workers, online performers, and full-service sex workers know well the importance of consent and boundary setting when engaging with both risky clients as well as those who are looking to safely explore a wider spectrum of sexual intimacy. They understand the complexities of consent that extend much farther beyond “yes means yes” and “no means no.” Indeed, sex workers have found that yes does not always mean yes and no sometimes signals to keep going. Consent is dynamic and individuals seeking sexual intimacy must be forthright in their expectations. By engaging in an open dialogue on sex and consent, defining consent clearly, and penalizing students for violating sexual boundaries or inciting sexual violence rather than punishing students for exhibiting healthy sexual behavior, FCUs might better manage occurrences of sexual violence on their campuses in fostering a culture of consent.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

The primary objectives of this thesis were to highlight underhanded practices of conservative Christian universities, call out the irony in their refusal to discuss healthy sexual behavior as they simultaneously stand to promote a well-rounded education, and bring sex work into a public discussion. While the failings of fundamentalist Christian universities are beginning to surface in national media, sex workers are continuously disregarded. American society stigmatizes and marginalizes sex providers, yet the likelihood remains that most everyone personally knows a sex worker. Sex workers are mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and friends. They, like most, have a life outside of their profession. Sex workers are also totally capable of speaking for themselves, and they often do. The problem is not that sex workers are voiceless. Rather, society does not allow sex workers to speak up.

So many women, men, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming persons have paved the way in shaping a new perspective on the act of sex and the expression of sexuality. If this thesis conveys any one message, it should be this: actively listen to those with firsthand experience. Whether that be sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, or the sale of consensual sex, those who know it best should be the ones guiding policies that work to impact their livelihood. This thesis imagines a future where sex work is decriminalized, sex workers are compensated for their labor, women and gender non-conforming individuals—and really no persons—have to fear harassment, threats, or death solely because of their gender expression or occupation, and sex work is no longer stigmatized. A future where Title IX coordinators have stopped justifying the

behavior of young, white male students and their failure in convicting perpetrators of sexual assault with “we just have to be fair to everyone.”

*What Fundamentalist Christian Universities Can Learn from Sex Workers About Consent Culture: A Cultural Study* brought together the seemingly contradictory subjects of Christian fundamentalist universities and sex work in an effort to demonstrate how even the most unlikely solutions exist to our unresolved problems. This analysis contributes something unique to an already diminutive body of academic literature. Not many people are talking about voluntary sex work at all—aside from those sex workers who must work immensely harder in gaining recognition—much less how some of the most stringent, conservative Christian campuses can emulate their best practices. Sex workers are the experts on sexual intimacy and consent. Sex work is primarily concerned with fostering a safe space to explore sex while respecting boundaries. Inviting a conversation into universities that focuses on healthy sexual behavior as practiced by members of the sex trade should not be confused with the glorification of sex. Rather, beginning an open dialogue is one step in the right direction to promote safe sexual intimacy. Sex workers do this better than anyone, so it would be sensible for universities to heed the advice of professionals in cultivating a culture of consent.

While the covering up of sexual assault on university campuses has not entirely ended with the dawn of the #MeToo movement and the notoriety of some universities in failing to abide by regulations of Title IX, some universities have stepped up to combat harmful practices in hiring new faculty and matching up their own policies to reflect federal guidelines (Watkins, 2016; Field, 2018; Watkins, 2016). Regardless of religious affiliation or lack thereof, all universities should work to foster the total wellbeing of

their students. This analysis focused on fundamentalist Christian universities specifically as these institutions act as a small-scale version of a larger American society which works to dictate the behavior of seemingly “deviant” people groups. FCUs are an interesting case study regarding both consent and rape culture in that, while superficially devout in their observance of biblical tradition, a great number of these universities have acted out of a self-interest that deviates from the message of Jesus Christ to love and serve thy neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39, NRSV). Conservative Christian universities can play a large part in the early formation of healthy student behaviors by normalizing sex and sexuality. Cultivating a larger society of acceptance and respect starts in the minds and hearts of students and educators. Should fundamentalist Christian universities ever feel unsure in how to better support their young scholars, *What Fundamentalist Christian Universities Can Learn from Sex Workers About Consent Culture: A Cultural Study* suggests they ask a sex worker.

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