

Title: Sex Work & Masculinities: Male Sex Workers as a Case for Intersectional Framing

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Abstract: Mainstream gender and intersectionalities studies have been slow to enthusiastically embrace looking at the lives of sex workers as places for critical information about sex and gender. Particularly in the case of men involved in sex work, early scholarship that considered them through the lens of disease prevention and deviance have clouded their importance as a population that can provide insight into the expression of race, class and masculinities in the United States. In this paper, I utilize survey and focus group data to consider the way that masculinities and sex work intersect in the lives of a population of African American male survival sex workers. I find that ideas about power, the nature of sex work, and what we mean by “sex workers” increase in nuance and complexity when I use an intersectional frame to study an understudied and undertheorized population. I demonstrate that considering sex workers primarily as people who express gender rather than deviants allows us to expand sex work, masculinities and sexualities studies. Intersectionalities allows research to look for rather than assume difference- suggesting that research into the lives of sex workers will continue to be revitalized by using this paradigm as a theoretical grounding point.

Bio: Libby Trudeau is a second-year PhD student in the department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame. After earning her MA in Social Science from the University of Chicago, she worked for two years as a Client Services Analyst for a non-profit in Chicago that does outreach work with men involved in survival sex work. There she ran a research initiative that explored the relationship between race and mental health in the lives of survival sex workers. Her research interests include gender and sexuality- specifically the way that American culture categorizes and responds to controversies regarding sex and gender.