

Sex Workers and Social Media Activism

TARA BURNS

Research About Sex Workers

- ▶ Unethical research: the Craigslist example.

- ▶ Sex workers on research:

“We would share the same stories over and over and we would still be shocked when we read their reports. No matter what we said to the researchers, their reports always said the same thing: we were victims who needed police and social workers to save us” (Iman, Fullwood, Paz, W & Hassan, 2009, p. 20)

Sex Workers on Refusing to Participate:

For too long researchers have been using sex workers as guinea pigs without any benefit accruing to sex workers as the result of research. Essentially academic careers are made on our backs. Further, some research has provided ammunition to those who want to suppress the sex industry and research findings have been used to support some of those arguments. In many countries sex workers already refuse to be involved in research because they can't see anything in it for them (Metzenrath, 1998, 11).

When your research population organizes against you:

“New media and new forms of organizing building on at least 40 years of struggle for rights, means that the studies “revealing” the “secret” lives people in the sex trade are read and critiqued by members of those very same communities. Gone are the days where sociologists can effectively pretend that they speak for “silenced” or “silent” groups of people. The people who were once described as “deviant,” the drug users, the prostitutes, the “queers,” all the people whose communities were once considered a “playground” to provide the “raw materials” for academic research—the “gift that kept on giving” according to Sudhir— are not and in fact have never been compliant and silent” (Swop-nyc.org, 2013).

Sex Workers Use Social Media to Educate Each Other About Research:

- ▶ IRB and University procedures.
- ▶ ESPLERP's Research Evaluation Tool.
- ▶ Stigmatizing research.
- ▶ Researcher's backgrounds.

Criticizing and Discounting Research:

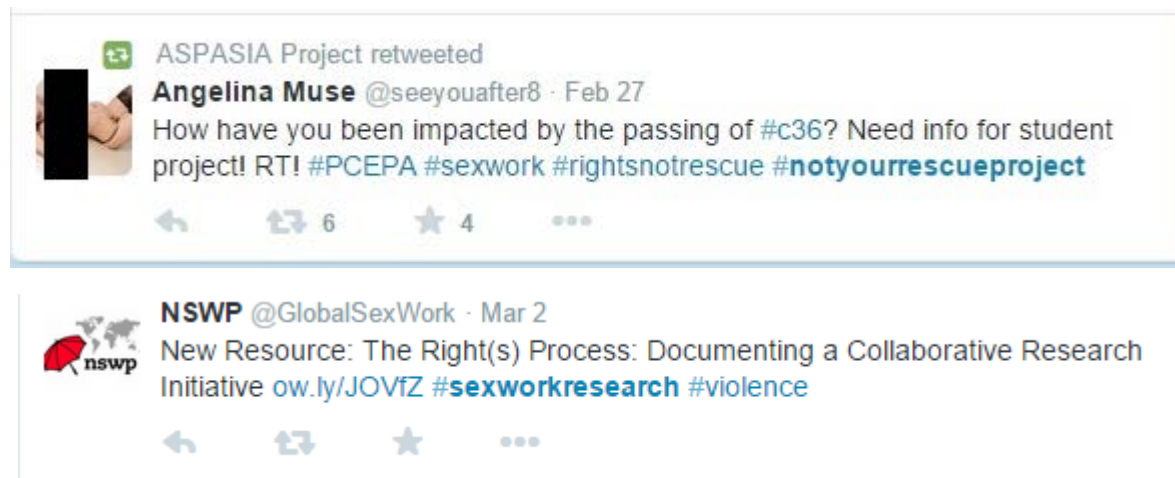
- ▶ The average age of entry into prostitution.

Maggie McNiell tracked down the source of Farley's often quoted average age of entry into prostitution (age 13). McNiell found that Farley's original presentation of this "fact" was attributed to a study of underage prostitutes in which 13 was the average age of their first sexual encounter with a boyfriend.

In that study the average age of entry into prostitution among underage prostitutes was 16 (McNiell, 2012). Following this blog and a lot of tweets, the age myth was eventually debunked in The Atlantic (Hall, 2014).

Counternarratives:

- ▶ #NotYourRescueProject
- ▶ Molli Desi - <http://maggiemcneill.wordpress.com/2014/05/12/guest-columnist-molli-desi-part-one/>



Promoting and Organizing Against Research:

- ▶ A recent survey that conflated all sex work with human trafficking and slavery was posted to a Facebook group where dozens of people took it offering critical responses. Some people criticized the methodology and suggested contacting the school. It was removed from the web the next day.
- ▶ Another recent survey that encouraged sex workers to get “out of the life” and asked stigmatizing questions was shared on FaceBook and twitter. Sex workers emailed the school’s IRB board and deans, posting screenshots of responses. The survey was removed from the web within days.
- ▶ Working with researchers and promoting research.



Bella Robinson

November 16, 2014

Attention sex workers, please take a minute and fill out this short survey that is purposely conflating sex work with slavery. Let our voices be heard in this data.

https://jfe.qualtrics.com/form/SV_6WsJy3KS3NxzDRX

Online Survey Software | Qualtrics Survey Solutions

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Steph Magenta and 2 others like this.



horrendous. The university should be reported to its accreditation agency for endorsing a "public opinion" survey from a student trying to qualify in "advanced research methods" when the survey is professionally substandard by even the mildest standards in higher education and the anthropology profession. The topic doesn't matter if the scholarly level in itself is failing so terribly. But since the questions indicate that the survey has an agenda of subjective prejudices about an already heavily abused aspect of social life, and since the university endorses this publicly, the university deserves to lose its accreditation, I think, I will formally report it.

November 16, 2014 at 11:28am · Like · 1



Bella Robinson Thank you

November 16, 2014 at 11:47am · Like

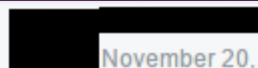


thank heavens for informed activists!!!!

November 16, 2014 at 11:54am · Like · 1



Bella Robinson Here is another 1 to report that I recently found being circulated by sex workers on twitter. The sad part is many sex workers on twitter have no clue what methodology is being used, or is the research peer reviewed or does it have a IRB etc.



Qualtrics shows it as currently inactive now.

November 20, 2014 at 8:06am · Unlike · 2



LOL

November 20, 2014 at 8:19am · Like



IRB exempt does not exist for research involving human contact.

ALL university approved studies that involve interacting with humans must have IRB approval. This includes asking people to take a survey. ... [See More](#)
November 20, 2014 at 8:21am · Like



Research without IRB approval can be done, sure. Anyone can put a survey online. That doesn't mean they're actually associated with a university or have to follow ethical guidelines, but anyone can do it.

A note about IRB protection - if you complete ... [See More](#)

November 20, 2014 at 8:25am · Like · 1



I can't get the sexworkersurvey to work. It just goes to a page with what looks like white rocks on grass, shaped like continents. Is it down, too?

Also, why is the College of Business, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, doing a survey on sex work? Sociology or Anthropology would be in a College of Sciences, not Business. Even law, but why on earth is a Business College....no clue.

November 20, 2014 at 8:31am · Like



We killed it!

November 20, 2014 at 8:33am · Like



We killed both of them?

November 20, 2014 at 8:33am · Like



Looks like it. I'm incredibly suspicious of the sexworkersurvey site.

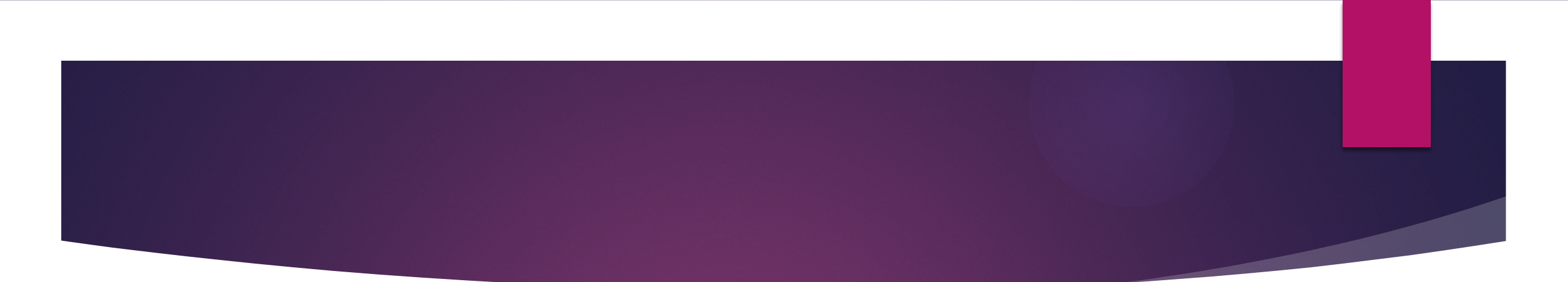
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University has four separate "colleges" (categories on campus for different degrees) - Arts & Sciences, Aviation, Business, and Engineering. ... [See More](#)



Research by Graduate Students | Daytona

Social Media Changes Research:

Social media has empowered sex workers and other marginalized populations to revolutionize the way research about them is conducted and interpreted. Sex workers and other marginalized research populations are teaching each other how to utilize social media and other online tools to create a more accurate narrative about their lived experiences. By providing a medium for the voices of people often perceived as silenced, social media has changed research.

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