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Hannah Pockock
Bridging the Gap: Integrating
Intersectional Oppression and the
Unconscious Mind in Prostitution
Discourse

Abstract

This paper brings intersectional theory into conversation with relational psychoanalytic theory to examine how the interlocking oppressions of race, class, and gender shape and sustain the commercial sexual exploitation of women, and how an intrapsychic analysis can shed light on women's entry into prostitution, the challenges they face in attempting to escape it, and considerations for psychotherapy with prostituted women. This paper attempts to bridge the gap between structural and intrapsychic analyses of prostitution, examining the interaction between structural oppression and intrapsychic processes that script multiply marginalized women for prostitution. This analysis challenges the notion of the universal "sex worker" subject, examining how the perpetuation of this narrative obscures the profoundly raced and classed aspects of commercial sexual exploitation. In bringing relational psychoanalytic concepts to bear on commercial sex and the women engaged in it, this paper attempts to illuminate the potential offered by contemporary relational thought for nuanced theoretical conceptualizations of prostituted women seeking treatment, and for psychotherapeutic approaches that take into account women's experiences of oppression, internalized subordination, and complex trauma. By bringing together an analysis of the role of interlocking oppressions in prostitution with a relational approach to psychodynamic therapy, this paper aims to encourage psychotherapists and social service providers to think critically about how best to understand and meet the needs of prostituted women.

Running head: BRIDGING THE GAP

BRIDGING THE GAP: INTEGRATING INTERSECTIONAL OPPRESSION AND THE
UNCONSCIOUS MIND IN PROSTITUTION DISCOURSE

A project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work.

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Northampton, MA

2014

Acknowledgements

I must begin by expressing my deep gratitude to Rachel Burnett, my thesis advisor, for her insight, encouragement, and curious mind, which challenged me to think critically and delve deeply. Your guidance and trust in my process made this project a pleasure. My great appreciation also goes out Ellen Fuller, a wise teacher who in so many ways started me down this path.

I am profoundly grateful for the many people who have supported me in mind, body, and spirit over the course of the past year. To Phillip, without whom I might never have come up for air, thank you for being a light to me in dark places, and filling my world with warmth, love, and wit. Endless thanks to my mother, Nancy Reder, who inspires me to do this work by the grace, skill, and wisdom she brings to her own, and whose insights were an invaluable part of the editing process; and to my father, Peter Pocock, whose tireless work for social change continually reignites my own passion for liberatory thought and action. To the many friends and family who fueled me through this process, thank you for your love and support.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes out to my clients, who have taught me much and opened my heart in more ways than I thought possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | ii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | iii |
| CHAPTER | |
| I INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY..... | 1 |
| II PROSTITUTION AND FEMINIST DISCOURSE..... | 12 |
| III INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE COLORBLIND FEMINISM OF PROSTITUTION DISCOURSE..... | 31 |
| IV RELATIONAL PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY..... | 49 |
| V DISCUSSION..... | 68 |
| REFERENCES..... | 101 |

CHAPTER I

Introduction and Methodology

Debates about prostitution and prostituted women abound. The arguments are heated, and the opposing sides of those arguments have become increasingly polarized. Should women in prostitution be considered victims or entrepreneurs? Should prostitution be abolished in an effort to end a particularly egregious form of systemic violence against women, or should it be legalized and regulated to promote protection of the rights of prostituted women? As the two sides become ever more diametrically opposed, the hope for finding a constructive policy response to prostitution dwindles and the services available to prostituted women take on potentially alienating moral overtones. Absent from many of these debates is a meaningful discussion of the ways in which prostitution is an issue that hinges not only on women's rights and patriarchal hegemony, but White¹ supremacy and the myriad intersections of race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other marginalized identities of women in prostitution. This centering of the prostitution discourse exclusively on gender often entails the assumption of a universal female sexuality that privileges White middle-class women's experience of gender, thereby

¹ I capitalize "White" throughout this paper to draw attention to a cultural categorization that typically goes unmarked and unnamed. As George Lipsitz remarks, as "the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organising principle in social and cultural relations" (2006, p. 1). I also capitalize "Black" throughout to align myself with antiracist feminists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Patricia Hill Collins (2004) who point out that "Black" denotes a population group with an identifiable history and so "require[s] denotation as a proper noun" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244).

BRIDGING THE GAP

silencing and reinforcing the subordination of women of color, poor women, and transwomen. This problematic tendency toward exclusion not only reproduces White supremacy, class hierarchies, and other structural inequalities, but alienates feminists of color, lower socioeconomic status, and other marginalized identities whose voices are silenced in the debates that could structure policy, the availability of social services, and the way we think and talk about prostitution and those engaged in it.

This paper attempts to address this gap in the literature, re-centering the discourse about prostitution on the intersections of these oppressions that create and sustain systems of commercial sexual exploitation. By analyzing prostitution through the lens of intersectionality theory, I hope to add my voice to those who have made an effort to explore the ways in which prostitution is produced by oppressions on multiple axes and reinforces the hegemonic power of elites. Through this focus on intersecting identities and oppressions in prostitution, I will aim to help fill the void of critical discussions of interlocking aspects of race, class, and gender in the prostitution literature in order to consider social service and psychotherapeutic responses to prostitution that are not only feminist responses to patriarchal control, but anti-racist and anti-oppressive responses that challenge White supremacy and other systems of dominance.

In an effort to help restore the dialectical tension between the two opposing sides of the prostitution debate, I will also explore the phenomenon of prostitution through the lens of relational psychodynamic theory, and Jessica Benjamin's theories of gender and intersubjectivity, which are informed by feminist critiques of psychodynamic thought and offer valuable ways in which to conceptualize women in prostitution, the relationships between those who sell sex and those who buy it, and the systems within which those

BRIDGING THE GAP

transactions occur. Relational theory also emphasizes the importance of restoring tension, ambiguity, and a “both/and” mentality rather than giving into the comforting simplicity of binaries—a concept that surely has much to offer to the highly polarized debates about prostitution in which either/or mentalities often stall the development of real solutions to the suffering of prostituted women, and to the oppressive systems that ensure they remain in prostitution. A more nuanced psychological understanding of prostitution can offer mental health and social service providers insight into more effective modes of service provision to prostituted women, who currently face substantial barriers to access and are often misunderstood by providers who lack specialized knowledge of the particular challenges and stresses faced by those in prostitution. Because relational psychodynamic theory considers the interactional, intersubjective field within which the mind and its intrapsychic conflicts develop, it provides a useful framework for conceptualizing the relational matrices within which prostituted women are engaged in the ongoing processes of self-definition and subjectivity.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this paper is to bring an analysis of the intersection of race, gender, and class in prostitution into conversation with a relational psychoanalytic perspective in order to propose a new conceptualization of prostitution that accounts for not only the structural elements of oppression and power, or the intrapsychic experiences of those in prostitution, but the complex and constant interaction between the two. While intersectionality and relational psychodynamic thought may seem an unlikely pairing of theoretical frameworks, it is precisely the disjunction between structural analyses of power and intrapsychic understanding in prostitution debates that this paper will attempt to

BRIDGING THE GAP

rectify. To achieve a deep and thorough analysis of the commercial sex industry and its impact on those involved in it requires not simply familiarity with the machinations of patriarchy or the conscious workings of the mind, but appreciation for the ways that minds are shaped (consciously and unconsciously) by their relationships with outside others and the power structures that define and organize those relationships.

Intersectionality theory provides a nuanced framework for analyzing the complex interactions of those external power structures within which individuals struggle to define their experiences, and encourages resistance to the kind of oversimplified categorization that contributes to internalized oppression. The central concept of intersectionality theory through which I will analyze prostitution and prostitution discourse is the idea that domination occurs not along a single axis (e.g. gender oppression or racial oppression), but through an interlocking matrix of oppression in which a person's (or community's) various marginalized and privileged identities interact (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989).

Furthermore, intersectional theorists suggest that self-definition and self-valuation can be valuable modes of resistance to the oppressive impact of fixed, internalized classifications that are often stereotyped and overly simplistic (Collins, 1986). These two concepts offer useful ways to understand prostitution as a phenomenon and to conceptualize possible modes of resistance to prostitution's often dehumanizing impact on those entrenched in it.

Relational approaches to psychodynamic theory both complement and complicate the structural conceptualizations offered by intersectional theorists. Relational psychodynamic thought, informed by feminist critiques of traditional psychoanalytic theory, emphasizes the importance of external and internalized patterns of relating in the development of intrapsychic processes, including the intersubjective manifestations of

BRIDGING THE GAP

dominance and submission, providing a valuable psychological counterpart to the social theory of intersectionality. Yet some relational theorists point out the challenge of self-definition and agency in a society that denies women authorship of their own desires (Benjamin, 1988). I will employ several concepts from relational theorists in my analysis of prostitution, including the central concept that intrapsychic structures and conflicts are developed through intersubjective experience, as well as the concepts of dissociated parts of self and mutual influence in the analytic relationship. I will also borrow from Jessica Benjamin's writings on mutual recognition; the role of domination in the objectification of women and women's quest for subjectivity; and the importance of restoring dialectical tension in contrast to either/or, doer/done-to complementarities in both psychoanalytic treatment and broader social debates. It is my hope that bringing these contemporary psychodynamic theories into conversation with intersectionality's structural analysis will allow for a more complex understanding of the relationship between power structures and the human mind that can shed light on the complex experiences of prostituted women rather than denying them subjectivity or dislocating them from their structural moorings.

Definitions and explanations of terms. Throughout this paper, I use the term *relational* to refer to a conceptual space within contemporary American psychoanalysis that is rooted in the tension between the intrapsychic and the interpersonal, which offers an understanding of the intrapsychic as profoundly shaped by interpersonal relationships and the internal representations of those relationships (Mitchell & Aron, 1999). Relational psychoanalysis is generally understood to be less a discrete school than a perspective that guides many psychodynamically informed psychotherapists in their understanding of the dynamic unconscious and their own role in the therapeutic relationship. Intersubjective

BRIDGING THE GAP

theory has been recognized as closely related to relational theory (Mitchell & Aron, 1999), and the terms *relational* and *intersubjective* are often used interchangeably to refer to perspectives that emphasize the interpersonal alongside the intrapsychic. Jessica Benjamin's intersubjective theory, on which much of my analysis is based, is widely cited as a part of the relational psychoanalytic movement (Clarke, Hahn, and Hoggett, 2008; Hoffman, 2011; Mitchell & Aron, 1999), and she herself has situated her perspective within the relational "camp" (Benjamin, 1995). Due to these considerations, I will occasionally use the term *intersubjective* where the authors referenced use this terminology, but will refer to the broader movement in psychoanalytic thought as *relational theory* to avoid confusion and redundancy.

The term *prostitution* in this study refers to the exchange of sex for money. I use the terms *prostituted women* and *women in prostitution* throughout this paper to refer to women and girls whose bodies are used in prostitution. While these terms are at times unwieldy, I reject the term *prostitute* as objectifying and essentializing, and opt instead to use language that reflects a person-centered approach to the analysis of prostitution. However, while both women and girls are used for commercial sex, I frequently use *women* as a stand-in to avoid excessively cumbersome phrases like "women and girls in prostitution." I do not use the term *sex work* or *sex worker* unless in reference to another author who uses this language, as I believe that these terms inaccurately portray prostitution as like any other work, masking the harm done to women in prostitution by pimps, johns, and others and naturalizing the capitalist and bourgeois assumptions that underpin the exploitation and commercialization of women.

Biases, strengths, and limitations. Like all researchers, I come to this work with preexisting biases that impact my analysis of prostitution. As a White, middle-class woman in academia, there are significant limits to my ability to speak to the experiences of oppression, marginalization, and exploitation faced by prostituted women. I am drawn to this work because of the tremendous psychological and physical pain I have witnessed in my interactions with prostituted women in the United States and abroad, and my belief that these harms must be considered in any discussion of prostitution or response to the commercial sex trade. Alongside those harms, I have seen extraordinary resilience, strength, and hope, and I am convinced that the people best situated to determine solutions to the commercial sexual exploitation of women are the women who have themselves been used in prostitution. While I offer in this paper an analysis of prostitution and several proposals for clinical and social service work with prostituted women, it is my hope that we will see an increasing number of women with prostitution histories in academic and political discussions about prostitution, so that interventions are informed not only by academics but by those with lived experience navigating the complex terrain of commercial sexual exploitation.

My belief that prostitution is symbolic and actual violence and my rejection of the narrative of prostitution as primarily about work and sexual agency shape my analysis throughout, but not in the sense that I consider prostituted women victims and men their victimizers. Rather, in my intersectional and relational analysis of prostitution, I draw on Sherene Razack's (1998) interrogation of the violence of prostitution and its roots in White supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism to reflect on the structural violence that renders some bodies violable and scripts them for prostitution. Despite this bias, I believe that

BRIDGING THE GAP

depolarization of the debate about prostitution remains possible when we attempt to reintroduce the tension between efforts at self-definition and the undeniable influence of external power structures and unconscious intrapsychic processes.

This study, in its dual focus on macro- and micro-level analyses (of prostitution as a system and of clinical theories relevant to prostituted women), attempts to bridge a gap in the literature between systemic and structural analyses of prostitution and the clinical psychological theories put forward to aid in the conceptualization and treatment of prostituted women seeking mental health care. It is also my hope that this study contributes to the literature by centering the discussion on topics and subjects that are often only peripherally addressed in writings on prostitution, such as race, White supremacy, internalized oppression, and contemporary psychoanalytic thought. Another intention in writing this paper is to challenge the ways we think and talk about prostitution and to encourage even readers with staunch opinions to embrace a dialectical stance that can expand what we are able to collectively imagine for the future of service provision for prostituted women.

While this study raises what I believe to be important questions about how we understand and address prostitution, I do not presume to offer comprehensive solutions to long-fought debates. In fact, due to the limited scope of this study, it may raise more questions than it answers. My intention, therefore, is not to answer a question but rather to complicate the terms of that question and propose alternative ways of conceptualizing the phenomenon of commodified sexual intimacy.

Another limitation of this paper is its focus on certain aspects of identity—namely gender, race, and class—such that other potentially salient identities are not examined.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The exclusive focus on women, for example, prohibits generalization to prostituted men or gender nonconforming people in prostitution. Like some other feminists, I understand prostitution to be largely about reinforcing patriarchy (Dworkin, 1997; MacKinnon, 1993), and White supremacist patriarchy at that (Razack, 1998), and therefore believe an analysis of the feminized nature of prostitution, in conjunction with its racialized and classed aspects, is a crucial starting point for understanding prostitution and its role in the subjugation of women in general, and poor women and women of color in particular. As most studies of prostitution have focused on oppression or empowerment along the single axis of gender, it is my intention to add complexity and nuance to that body of literature by employing a multiaxial approach that analyzes the interaction of race and class among women in prostitution. While studies of men, masculinity, feminization, and gender nonconformity in the commercial sexual transaction would contribute much to the analysis of gendered aspects of prostitution, such explorations are beyond the scope of this study. Similarly, in an effort to deepen my analysis by limiting the scope of this paper, I have not included an analysis of the role of sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, country of origin, or other identities in prostitution. These topics deserve thorough and nuanced exploration that is beyond the scope of this paper, and it is my hope that future research will pick up these threads to enrich our understanding of the roles of these and other intersecting identities in prostitution.

The limited scope of this study also restricts the depth of my overview of relational psychodynamic thought, which may render the psychoanalytic portion of this paper less accessible to non-clinical readers. This risk arises wherever psychoanalytic theory is brought into conversation with non-psychological theories, and is heightened by outdated

BRIDGING THE GAP

assumptions about psychoanalysis. Yet the field of contemporary relational psychoanalysis, informed as it is by feminist thought, queer theory, antiracist movements, and other social movements of recent decades, has much to contribute to interdisciplinary studies of social phenomena, and its role in this analysis is, I believe, a vital one. In the interest of interdisciplinary accessibility, I have attempted to avoid psychoanalytic jargon wherever possible, and to distill psychoanalytic concepts with sufficient clarity to make this study useful to readers from other disciplines.

With this interdisciplinary focus in mind, the following chapter will review both the literature on prostitution as a social phenomenon and on the psychological impacts of prostitution on the women engaged in it. I begin with a review of the limited literature on prostitution and identities such as race, gender, and class, and then outline the primary contemporary North American perspectives on prostitution, including the “prostitution as sex work” and “prostitution as sexual violence” viewpoints and variations within the two. I will also explore the increasing popularity of campaigns against sex-trafficking as distinct from “voluntary” prostitution, and situate myself within these debates. The chapter culminates in a review of the psychological literature related to prostituted women in an effort to highlight the importance of a trauma-informed approach to conceptualizing both the issue of prostitution and the treatment of prostituted women who could benefit from mental health care.

CHAPTER II

Prostitution and Feminist Discourse

The academic literature on prostitution has expanded significantly since the late 20th century, apparently due in large part to the focus of the public health community on the HIV/AIDS crisis in the last quarter of the 20th century, and the more recent focus on sex trafficking by scholars in various fields over the past two decades or so. This chapter will explore the small body of literature that has focused on marginalized identities in prostitution, as well as the broader literature that has found differences in the experience of prostitution, age of entry into prostitution, violence in prostitution and other variables by race, gender identity, class, and other identities. I begin with this examination of the existing literature on identities and prostitution in an effort to re-center oppressed identities in the discussion of prostitution, where these systemic oppressions have so often been relegated to the periphery. I will then summarize the current debates in prostitution discourse, and align myself with the argument that prostitution is inherently a form of violence against women. I will also argue that prostitution is made possible by and perpetuates the assumption of men's right to sexual access to the bodies of women of color and poor women, which further supports the argument for shifting the focus of prostitution debates away from romanticized depictions of White middle-class prostitution and toward frank discussions of the structural and interpersonal violence visited on multiply oppressed and racialized women. While I situate myself on one side of this debate, I will

also attempt to highlight some of the blind spots of each discourse where room for discussion (rather than disagreement), and perhaps even common ground, may exist. As this paper will also argue, prostitution and trafficking are intricately related phenomena, and so this chapter will both briefly review the literature on the relationship between prostitution and trafficking, and situate me with those feminists who suggest that to attempt to draw a sharp distinction between the two phenomena is to ignore the suffering and coercive tactics of control experienced by many in prostitution, and to miss the ways in which the acceptance of a global trade in commercialized sex creates the demand for trafficked women and children. A brief examination of the literature on the mental health of prostituted women will follow, in which I make the case for a focus on the trauma inherent to prostitution in an effort to step away from the victim/free agent binary and allow for the reality of traumatic sequelae that impact women's sense of self, the world, their pimps, and their possibilities for the future. The complex impact of trauma (and particularly of complex trauma) must be taken into account to more fully understand and situate the experiences and choices of prostituted women in clinical and social service work with this population.

Race, Gender Identity, Class, and Sexual Orientation in Prostitution

While writings on prostitution—as violent harm or liberating transgression, as exploitation or choice of profession—are abundant and varied, most theorists focus on the prostitution debate as primarily an issue of women's rights. Race, class, and sexual orientation are generally considered secondary to the issue of gender in prostitution, whether the argument is that women in prostitution are victims of patriarchal violence or that they are subverting traditional gender norms. Razack (1998) notes that “race and

BRIDGING THE GAP

class lurk in the shadows of contemporary feminist accounts of prostitution and are never fully integrated, thereby serving to centre the White middle-class woman's experience of gender" (p. 343). While prostitution is certainly a gendered issue, it is also a profoundly raced and classed issue. Relegating race and class to the periphery of conversations about prostitution supports the formation of an unquestioned "gender-based paradigm in which a universal woman embodies the characteristics of the most privileged women" (Razack, 1998, p. 340), which can too easily result in the privileging of White middle-class women in the analysis of a phenomenon that primarily impacts women who hold marginalized identities.

Kramer and Berg (2003) found that, in a sample of 309 women working in street-level prostitution in Phoenix, Arizona, women of minority racial and ethnic backgrounds entered prostitution at significantly earlier ages than their White counterparts. Minority women who also experienced a childhood risk factor (such as physical or sexual abuse, or parental drug or alcohol abuse) had a hazard rate for entry into prostitution that was roughly twice that of White participants. This study did not control for socioeconomic status prior to entry into prostitution, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the intersection of class and race in this study, but given the impact of centuries of racism on the socioeconomic status of many people of color, it is likely that both race and class (so intertwined in our society) contributed to this disparity. In a secondary analysis of the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health*, adolescents of color were significantly more likely to have traded or sold sex than their White peers (Kaestle, 2012). It has been estimated that, of the women prostituted on the streets in Vancouver, Canada, 80% are indigenous women (Lynne, 1998). As Farley, Baral, Kiremire, and Sezgin (1998) point out,

BRIDGING THE GAP

“[p]rostitution is considered a reasonable job choice for poor women, indigenous women and women of color, instead of being seen as exploitation and human rights violation” (p. 421). The bodies of women of color and poor women have long been considered to be sexually available to men, particularly White men of the middle and upper classes (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1981; Razack, 1998), and, as Razack (1998) points out, “[r]acialized bodies can seldom leave the space of prostitution in the White imagination; it is a space worn on the body” (p. 356).

Razack also argues that homelessness and displacement create “women without a place” (1998, p. 358) who are thereby unable to stake claims and assert power as can those who are propertied and have a home. The women of color and racialized poor women who are so often dispossessed by violence (structural as well as interpersonal) are too often driven to prostitution by their extraordinarily limited choices. Kaestle (2012) found that homelessness was a significant predictor of selling sex, suggesting that commercial sex is often a survival strategy for poor teens those who have no other means of supporting themselves. This form of commercial sex, particularly among homeless youth and adults who often sell or trade sex for shelter, food, money, protection, drugs, and other needs and wants, is often referred to as *survival sex*. While varying terminology has sometimes been employed in the literature, the term *survival sex* is often used to describe transactional sex in which the “exchange is not necessarily such a straightforward cash transaction” (Walls & Bell, 2011) as is generally implied by the terms *prostitution* and *sex work*. Within the homeless youth population, there is fairly consistent evidence that gay and bisexual homeless males engage in survival sex at significantly higher rates than heterosexual homeless males (Lankenau, Clatts, Welle, Goldsamt, & Gwadz, 2005; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt,

BRIDGING THE GAP

Tyler, & Johnson, 2004). While very few studies have compared survival sex behavior in transgender homeless youth as compared to female- and male-identified homeless youth, studies of trans-youth that do exist suggest that survival sex is a common experience for many of these youth (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Walls & Bell, 2011). Homophobia and transphobia are thought to be a precipitating factor in the participation in survival sex for these groups of homeless youth, as many are forced to leave their homes due to the intolerance of their caretakers, and often wind up on the street with survival sex as a last resort for survival (Hunter, 2008). A study of survival sex among 1,711 homeless youth in 28 states and the District of Columbia found that African American youth and other youth of color were significantly more likely to engage in survival sex than White homeless youth (Walls & Bell, 2011).

Farley et al. (2004) found that 75% of the 854 currently or recently prostituted women interviewed in nine countries had been homeless at some point in their lives, and the vast majority of the women were poor. Eighty-nine percent of 785 people in prostitution interviewed in the same study expressed a desire to get out of prostitution, but did not believe they had another option for survival. Vanwesenbeeck (1994) noted that poverty and length of time in prostitution were each associated with greater violence experienced in prostitution. These findings undermine the argument often asserted by proponents of prostitution that most women in prostitution are middle class, and voluntarily choose to prostitute out of a range of other options (Bell, 1994).

Also notable is the transnational nature of the contemporary trade in commercial sex, which both grows out of earlier globalizing periods of transatlantic slavery, colonization, and empire expansion, and reinforces those hierarchical relationships

BRIDGING THE GAP

between the (White) global north and the (brown and black) global south (Ifekwunigwe, 2004). The feminization of poverty in the 20th and 21st centuries has pushed increasing numbers of women from the global south and east to migrate to the global north and west in search of work to support their families, where many are either trafficked into the sex industry or find themselves with no other options but to sell sex in countries where they do not speak the language or have family support (Thorbeck, 2002; Westwood & Phizacklea, 2000). As women of color migrate to wealthier nations, impelled by forces of globalization, “19th century colonial stereotypes of the ‘Third World’ woman of color as exotic and sexually uninhibited are recycled in the 21st century global sex trade” (Ifekwunigwe, 2004, p. 401). Yet these stereotypes must be considered within the “feminized circuits of global capitalism” (Ifekwunigwe, 2004, p. 407) that render the face of forced migration (and as a result, of transnational prostitution) distinctly young, female, and non-White. As women of color migrate to wealthier nations, men from the global north make the journey to countries in the global south to buy women and girls for sex, further cementing the notion that women of color are “exotic” and available for sex (Cabezas, 2009; Rivers-Moore, 2013).

The Prostitution Debate

Prostitution is a hotly contested topic in feminist discourse. The debate tends to center on the concept of agency, and has become highly polarized, with opposing sides constructing prostitution as either inherently exploitative, or liberating (Kissil & Davey, 2010). Feminists who oppose prostitution argue that prostituted women are compelled into prostitution by their social circumstances (namely systemic gender inequality, structural racism, and lack of economic opportunities), and so meaningful consent to prostitute is impossible (Kissil & Davey, 2010). Activists in this camp argue that

BRIDGING THE GAP

positioning the commercial sexual exploitation of women as “sex work” masks the harm done to women in prostitution, from frequent physical violence and rapes at the hands of pimps and johns, to the psychological trauma of repeated violation in the form of commercial sexual transactions (Farley et al., 2004).

Proponents of prostitution as a viable form of work argue that, while the choice to enter prostitution may be constrained by social circumstances, it is nonetheless a matter of agency, and to prohibit “sex work” would be to further marginalize women by denying them the right to choose how they earn an income and what they do with their bodies (Doezema, 2000). Furthermore, these activists suggest, framing all commercial sex as inherently exploitative denigrates women who have made the choice, however constrained, to enter the sex industry, while belittling the suffering of those who are clearly forced, defrauded, or coerced into commercial sex (Chuang, 2010). Activists on this end of the spectrum tend to support legalization of prostitution, to allow for regulation that advocates argue would protect prostituted women, afford them greater control over their working conditions and client selection, and facilitate the implementation of disease screenings and other health and safety measures (Hayes-Smith & Shekarkhar, 2010).

Activists on both sides of this ideological schism tend to favor legislative reforms that would end the criminalization of women who sell sex, affording them greater protection under the law. Those who oppose prostitution, however, oppose wholesale legalization of the commercial sex trade, and often advocate for decriminalizing those who sell sex while penalizing the purchase of sex or profiting from the sale of another in prostitution, arguing that to legalize prostitution entirely is to condone exploitation and violence against women. Studies conducted in the Netherlands, Germany, parts of

BRIDGING THE GAP

Australia, and other areas where prostitution has been legalized demonstrate massive expansion in the sex industries of these countries and sharp increases in trafficking of women and girls to meet the increased demand for purchased sex that comes with legalized prostitution (Raymond, Hughes, & Gomez, 2001; Raymond, 2004). Activists opposed to legalization point out that the harms of prostitution, including rape, physical and sexual assault, and mental and physical health problems, do not disappear when prostitution is legalized (Farley, 2004). Many who oppose legalization support an alternative, often referred to as decriminalization, which penalizes the purchase of sex, while decriminalizing prostituted people themselves (Raymond, 2004). Studies of the sex industry in Sweden, which passed such a law in 1999, show that the legislation may have led to a decrease in the sex industry, has likely deterred and limited trafficking of women for commercial sex into Sweden (particularly when compared with neighboring countries without such legislation in place), and that an increased number of women are seeking aid from agencies that offer assistance in leaving prostitution and finding economic alternatives (Ekberg, 2004).

Many pro-sex work feminists take issue with any attempts at dismantling the commercial sex trade, arguing that such attempts show a disregard for women's right to choose prostitution as a livelihood. Theorists in this camp warn against falling into "the morality trap" of opposition to prostitution, positioning anti-prostitution theories as self-righteous, anti-sex moralizing (Chuang, 2010; Shaver, 1994). Many such proponents of legalized commercial sex argue that sex sector work is an inherently liberating transgression and display of empowered female sexuality. Schweitzer (2000), for example, describes strip clubs as places where women subvert social norms in the act of "realizing

BRIDGING THE GAP

their sexuality while simultaneously holding complete control of it” (p. 72). Duncan (1996) argues that women engaged in prostitution threaten or subvert “notions of ‘respectable’ and ‘orderly’ behaviour on the part of women who, it is thought, should be escorted at night in public spaces (as cited in Razack, 1998, p. 348). Others, like several of the contributors to *Whores and Other Feminists*, edited by Jill Nagle (1997), make the claim that prostitution is a minoritized sexuality, and is destabilizing to heteronormativity (as cited in Razack, 1998, p. 348).

As Razack (1998) argues, however, “subversion...cannot be the basis of our politics unless we have worked out how various women are regulated differently and how hegemonic discourses combine to secure the dominance of White, male, and middle-class elites” (p. 346). Razack points out that the construction of commercialized sexuality as subversive “originates in an understanding of how White middle-class women are regulated in patriarchy” that emerged in the Victorian era, but fails to take into account the racialization and sexualization of women of color and poor women that presumes them to be sexually available and engaged in the public sphere in a way that White middle-class women of the day were not. While rejection of the gendered role of moral guardian of the domestic sphere might look transgressive for a White middle-class woman,

Racialized and poor women (each differently racialized), presumed to be sexually available outside of marriage (in discourses of slavery and colonialism, for instance), are already thought to inhabit the space of prostitution. Their choice to inhabit what is already presumed of them cannot be read as transgressive but as conforming to the structures of patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism (p. 348).

BRIDGING THE GAP

The argument for prostitution as transgression falls flat when race and class are given their full weight. It is White middle-class women's prescribed gender roles that are held up as the norms to be transgressed, and White middle-class women's protected and policed sexuality that is imagined to be "liberated" by the performance of prostitution. Yet the statistics undermine this privileging of White middle-class narratives in discourses about prostitution, as the ranks of women engaged in commercial sex are disproportionately populated by poor women and women of color.

Another argument frequently voiced by feminists who claim that prostitution is transgression is that their conclusions stem from the words of women in prostitution, and that to ignore what prostituted women say about their work is to take on the patriarchal Victorian morality that posits prostitution as degenerate and reprehensible. The stories of women in prostitution, these feminists argue, voice themes of agency and resilience and support the claim that prostitution is positively subversive (Nagle, 1997). As Baldwin (1992) points out, however, what is pursued in these narratives is "a story of sameness," or the ways the lives of women in prostitution are just like any other woman's (in Razack, 1998, p. 352). Conspicuously absent from these stories are accounts of the violence and the psychological and physical harms specific to prostitution. Baldwin (1992) notes that "(t)he dead, the deeply incoherent, and those presently living in conditions of grave danger are not participants" (p. 85) in these accounts published by pro-sex work feminists. Razack (1998) concludes that what many of these narratives have in common is a "foray into degeneracy" that could "only be told by those who do inhabit a position of White middle-class respectability...that in the end only confirms the traveler in her position of privilege because she is able to emerge unscathed" (p. 353). The option to return to the comfort and

BRIDGING THE GAP

security of White middle-class respectability is not one afforded to the women of color and poor women in prostitution, who cannot travel “from being good girls to bad girls” and back again, precisely because they were never constructed as “good girls” to begin with (Razack, 1998, p. 353).

Stories of victimhood in prostitution published by anti-prostitution feminists are often similarly one-sided, offering up tales of terror in which women are helplessly exploited and deprived of all agency. Jacobsen and Skilbrei (2010) argue that the polarizing nature of prostitution debate forces women in prostitution “to exclude most traces of agency from their self-representations in order to be recognized as victims and most traces of victimhood to be recognized as agents” (p. 196). Those who argue for prostitution as agency point out that the victim role sometimes assigned to prostituted women by those who oppose prostitution is disempowering, and can silence and erase the parts of women’s stories that articulate the ways in which they enact their limited agency in their lives.

Further complicating this debate is the ever evolving conceptualization of sex trafficking, defined by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) as the act of inducing a minor to perform a commercial sex act, or “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of...a commercial sex act” (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, 2000). Some feminists argue that to draw a line between prostitution and sex trafficking is to make an arbitrary distinction, as studies of prostituted women have found that, regardless of the ways in which they entered prostitution, the majority of women in prostitution want to get out, yet feel trapped or unable to leave due

BRIDGING THE GAP

to such barriers as homelessness and lack of job training and experience. Farley et al. (1998), for example, found that 92% of prostituted women they interviewed in five countries wanted to leave prostitution, but felt unable to do so, and Kramer (2004) found that 94% of women in street-level prostitution in Phoenix, AZ, would like to leave prostitution but felt trapped by lack of opportunities. Even the International Labor Organization, which defines prostitution as “work,” found that in Indonesia 96% of those interviewed wanted to escape prostitution (Jones, Sulistyaningsih & Hull, 1998). Barry (1995) and Giobbe, Harrigan, Ryan, and Gamache (1990) estimate that 90% of women in prostitution are controlled by pimps, who use physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, social isolation, denial and minimization of the abuse, and other control tactics to dominate and exploit “their women” and keep them in “the life”² (as cited in Farley et al., 1998).

Further challenging the notion of prostitution as the free exercise of women’s agency is the growing body of research that demonstrates the average age of entry into prostitution is fourteen (considered by some to be a conservative estimate), and the first sexual experience of many women in prostitution is rape (Giobbe, 1996; Silbert & Pines, 1982; Weisberg, 1987). The vast majority of adult women in prostitution were sexually abused as children, and studies show high rates of physical abuse in childhood as well (Abramovich, 2005; Farley, 2006). As Farley (2004) points out, “a qualitative distinction between prostitution of children and prostitution of adults is arbitrary and it obscures the...extensive history of trauma that is commonplace in prostitution...The 14 year-old in

² “The life” is a term used within the sex trade to refer to the subculture of prostitution, complete with its own rules and power hierarchy. Pimps often refer to pimping as “the game,” while women and girls who are prostituted are said to have been in “the life” (Smith, 2013).

BRIDGING THE GAP

prostitution eventually turns 18 but she has not suddenly made a new ‘vocational choice’” (p. 36). Van der Kolk (1989) details the ways in which survivors of trauma (particularly childhood trauma) are unconsciously driven to repeat the trauma through conditioned responses to stimuli and neuroendocrinologic reactions to stress, placing childhood sexual abuse survivors at significantly increased risk for exploitation through prostitution and pornography. Adolescents escaping violent homes are easy prey for pimps, who claim to offer them protection, love, and romance, and then exploit them for financial gain. The distinction, then, between “trafficked” women and women who “voluntarily” prostitute becomes hazy.

Pro-prostitution feminists, however, take issue with this position, arguing that to label all prostituted women “victims” is disempowering, creating “a totalizing narrative of victimization that refuses to engage in any marking of relative control or freedom” (Chuang, 2010). These theorists argue that the “oppression paradigm” is monolithic and fails to take into account “the broad constellation of work arrangements, power relations, and personal experiences among participants in sexual commerce” (Weitzer, 2011, p. 1338). Yet this is a false dichotomy, positioning agency and oppression as mutually exclusive, rather than co-occurring and intertwined. Certainly, there is a range of experiences among women in prostitution, just as there is a range of experiences among men who buy women for sex, or pimps who exploit women for financial gain. Far from ignoring this variety of experiences, anti-prostitution advocates argue that the whole range of prostituted women’s experiences of commercial sex occur within the constructs of institutional subordination, predicated on the patriarchal oppression of women and normalization of the assumption of men’s right of access to women’s bodies (Pateman,

BRIDGING THE GAP

1999). As Pateman (1999) points out, feminists who oppose prostitution do not do so because they are contemptuous of women in prostitution, or fail to acknowledge the humanity and agency of those women, but because they object to a system in which “men demand that women’s bodies are sold as commodities in the capitalist market” (p. 56).

This structural, rather than individual, critique of the commercial sex trade affords us a useful lens through which to contextualize the diverse experiences of women in prostitution. Chudakov, Ilan, Belmaker, and Cwikel (2002) use case studies to demonstrate the range of origins, motivations, psychological experiences, needs, and aspirations of women in prostitution in Israel, including women who enjoy being able to make a comfortable living through prostitution, women who suffer from chronic physical and mental health problems pursuant to their entry into prostitution, women with college degrees, and women who desperately wish to escape prostitution but do not know how. Jacobsen and Skilbrei (2010), in their interviews with transnational prostituted women in Norway, found that common themes of “intentions, choices, and desires” (p. 201) came to the fore. The need of prostituted women to represent themselves in ways that are compatible with their senses of self must be respected and valued, and their varied voices sought out in research on the experiences of women in prostitution. Yet the inclusion of these voices should not eliminate discussion of the structural forces that make them a reality. Jacobsen and Skilbrei (2010), who have interviewed women in prostitution, point out that many women reject the notion of “victimhood,” preferring to position themselves as active agents, yet these same interviews tend to include numerous references to the violence, deception, and exploitation these women face in prostitution. Certainly all humans make what we perceive to be the best choices available to us, and in that sense are

BRIDGING THE GAP

active agents. The question remains, however: what choices are made available to women, particularly poor women and women of color, from which they are “free” to choose?

A challenge of the movements that seek to improve the lot of prostituted women must be to work to depolarize the passionate arguments surrounding prostitution, giving voice to the nuances of prostituted women’s experiences, while prioritizing research and solutions that address the violence, coercion, and health concerns faced by women in prostitution around the world. Anti-prostitution feminists must discuss the varied experiences of women in prostitution more openly, making their accounts three-dimensional, and avoiding the criticism that they are ignoring evidence that might undermine their claims (Weitzer, 2011), while pro-prostitution activists must expand their analysis to take into account the structural forces of patriarchy, capitalism (Pateman, 1999), and White supremacy (Razack, 1998) that make prostitution the only option for many women around the world.

Trauma and Mental Health Issues Among Prostituted Women

Regardless of one’s ideological stance on prostitution, it is vital for service providers, advocates, and policy makers to understand the violence experienced by women in prostitution, and the mental health issues that frequently result, in order to know how best to serve and advocate for this vulnerable and multiply-traumatized population. Attention to the multiple traumas faced by prostituted women is also vital to understanding why so many women remain in prostitution despite the wish to leave. A thorough understanding of the trauma experienced by prostituted women, and the psychological harm it causes, must be central to arguments about prostitution as violence, along with an understanding of the structural forces of systemic violence and

BRIDGING THE GAP

institutionalized oppression. At the same time, a focus on the traumas specific to prostitution can facilitate a fuller understanding of the complexity of the experiences of prostituted women, who are both active agents living within extraordinary constraints, and uniquely subject to physical, sexual, and psychological violence and control.

Studies show high rates of violence against prostituted women (Farley et al., 1998; Farley et al., 2004; Silbert & Pines, 1982; Suresh, Furr, & Srikrishnan, 2009; Zhang et al., 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2008), including physical assaults, rape and other sexual violence, and threats with deadly weapons. Some research has shown that women of color are disproportionately impacted by violence in prostitution (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). As noted above, numerous studies have pointed to early trauma, and particularly childhood sexual abuse, as an antecedent to entry into prostitution (Farley et al., 1998; Kramer & Berg, 2003; Medrano, Hatch, Zule, & Desmond, 2003; Silbert & Pines, 1982). As Leidholdt (2003) explains, “prostitution often does not require overt physical coercion or verbal threat since the system of domination perpetuated by sex industry businessmen and buyers is intrinsically coercive. Women and girls who enter prostitution are seasoned into it” (p. 172), a process often referred to as “turning out.” “Turning out” is a process by which pimps strip women of their identities and the belief that they are entitled to bodily integrity, accomplished through rape and sexual humiliation, changing the woman’s name and appearance, alienating her from family and friends, and “instilling in her the belief that she is an ‘outlaw,’ rejected by yet superior to ‘straight’ society” (Leidholdt, 2003, p. 172). Women in prostitution are instilled with obedience to the rules of “the game,” which restrict the women’s behavior, from whom they are allowed to make eye contact with, to where they are allowed to walk (Williamson & Cluse-Tolar, 2002). Violations of these rules

BRIDGING THE GAP

are punished severely, often with rape and beatings (Giobbe, 1996; Leidholdt, 2003; Williamson & Cluse-Tolar, 2002). Once a woman is sufficiently “seasoned,” threats and psychological manipulation are leveraged to elicit obedience from a thoroughly traumatized woman. These coercive tactics establish and reinforce a pimp’s control over “his” women, entrapping many women in a form of abusive captivity that can seem more dangerous to leave than to endure.

As would be expected in a population that experiences such high rates of violence, studies have shown high rates of mental health issues in prostituted women around the world (Choi et al., 2009; Chudakov et al., 2002; Farley et al., 1998; Farley et al., 2004; Hossain, Zimmerman, Abas, Light, & Watts, 2010; Lau et al., 2010; Ling, Wong, Holroyd, & Gray, 2007; Mayfield-Schwarz, 2007; Perdue et al., 2012; Rössler et al., 2010; Seib, Fischer, & Najman, 2009; Sloss, 2003; Suresh et al., 2009; Tsutsumi, Izutsu, Poudyal, Kato, & Marui, 2008; Wang et al., 2007; Zimmerman et al., 2008), including high rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder (MDD), suicidality, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorders. Ongoing, repeated trauma, such as that experienced by many women in the commercial sex trade, is often associated with a symptom constellation that many trauma researchers refer to as complex posttraumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) or Disorders of Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified (DESNOS), with its own set of implications for treatment (Herman, 1992, 1997; Luxenberg, Spinazzola, & van der Kolk, 2001; van der Kolk, Roth, Pelcovitz, Sunday, & Spinazzola, 2005). Symptoms of complex traumatic stress can include significant alterations in affect regulation, dissociation and amnesia, deep feelings of shame, identification with the perpetrator, somatization, impaired relationships, and altered systems of meaning (Courtois, 2004). The repeated

BRIDGING THE GAP

nature of the trauma experienced by many prostituted women, the conditions of coercive control under which they are often induced to work, and the childhood abuse histories of many prostituted women all suggest that this population may have high rates of complex traumatic stress (Herman, 1997). Two recent studies that examined DESNOS symptoms in prostituted women found high rates of DESNOS among prostituted women in Korea (Choi et al., 2009) and Tacoma, Washington (Mayfield-Schwarz, 2007), suggesting that this diagnosis may well be useful for conceptualizing the symptoms experienced by traumatized women in prostitution and developing treatment options that take into account the complexity of the trauma experienced by many prostituted women. Studies on treatment of PTSD suggest that empirically based interventions for PTSD may fail to address the more complex symptoms of complex trauma survivors (Spinazzola, Blaustein, & van der Kolk, 2005), indicating the need for treatment approaches that take into account the nuances of complex, chronic trauma and its aftermath for prostituted women with complex trauma histories.

Women have a range of experiences in prostitution that encompass varying degrees of agency, coercion, and violence. Services provided to prostituted women, from mental health treatment to social services, must take into account the complexity of these experiences, including the role of early childhood trauma and traumatic experiences in prostitution, as well as the importance of self-definition and agency. Also vital is an understanding of the structural oppression that contributes to women's entry into prostitution and the barriers they face in exiting, particularly when working with women of color and poor women in prostitution. To better understand the structural forces of oppression that create and sustain prostitution as an option for certain groups of women

BRIDGING THE GAP

who are scripted for the trade in commercial sex, the following chapter will undertake a review of the literature on intersectionality that illustrates how different women's bodies are differently regulated by systems of dominance. I will then suggest how intersectional theory can be applied to prostitution to allow for a more nuanced analysis that considers the way prostitution operates along multiple axes of oppression.

CHAPTER III

Intersectionality and the Colorblind Feminism of Prostitution Discourse

The prostitution debate has largely been argued along the single axis of gender oppression, obscuring the complex interactions of multiple inequalities that create and sustain the commercial sex industry. Intersectionality, the analysis of the interaction of different hierarchies of power and oppression and the interlocking social categorizations engendered by these structures of dominance, provides a valuable counter to this reductionist tendency of both pro- and anti-prostitution feminists by attending to the ways in which systems of race, gender, and class hierarchy converge. I will begin this chapter with a brief overview of the theoretical evolution of intersectionality. I will then explore in more depth the foundational writings on intersectionality that reframed discussions of sexual and domestic violence to demonstrate the ways that the marginalization of women of color and poor women has been reinforced by conventional social justice movements, and suggest parallels to traditional analyses of prostitution and sex trafficking. I will argue that while women of color and poor women have benefitted from both antiracist and antisexist challenges to the regulation of the bodies of women and people of color, the specific interplay of race, class, and gender relating to the violation of the bodies of Black women and racialized poor women has received little attention from social movements, including those that seek to address prostitution and sex trafficking. While intersectionality is an invaluable analytical tool for exploring interactions between any and

BRIDGING THE GAP

all identities, both subordinated and privileged, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze all the possible combinations of identities that influence and are influenced by the phenomenon of prostitution. This thesis will pay particular attention to the intersections of race, gender, and class that make certain bodies simultaneously invisible and violable, filling the cultural imagination and the commercial sex trade with a category of women who are racialized, sexualized, and scripted for prostitution. In applying an intersectional framework to the discourse around prostitution and prostituted women, I hope to challenge the idea that prostitution is simply a question of oppression or empowerment along gender lines, and to locate women of color and poor women “at the center of overlapping systems of subordination” in order to move them from the margins of single-axis prostitution politics that have historically established priorities for addressing prostitution as though these women did not exist (MacKinnon, 2013, p. 1020).

The Evolution of Intersectionality

Intersectionality emerged out of late twentieth century Black feminist thought and the recognition that traditional antiracist and feminist movements did not adequately represent the interests of Black women, and indeed sometimes reinforced their subordination. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) were some of the first theorists to write about the concept of interlocking matrices of privilege and oppression, which challenged the accepted single-axis framework for thinking about subordination and disadvantage. Crenshaw introduced the term “intersectionality” in her 1989 essay, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” to address the marginalization of Black women within antidiscrimination law and purportedly anti-

BRIDGING THE GAP

oppressive social movements that resulted from the intersection of their identities as Black and female. The theory exposes the faults of the single-axis framework, in which the focus is on members of subordinated groups who are otherwise privileged but for their singular marginalized identity (eg: middle class Black men who are privileged but for their race, middle class White women who are privileged but for their gender), while those who hold multiple subordinated identities (eg: poor Black women) experience what social psychology researchers Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach have termed “intersectional invisibility” that excludes them from historical narratives and political and social discourses (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). This focus on otherwise privileged group members “marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination,” creating a distorted interpretation of racism and sexism grounded in experiences that only represent a particular subset of a vastly more complicated system of interlocking oppressions (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Movements that have emerged to challenge structural oppression have formed along this single axis of analysis, situating feminism, for example, firmly around the experiences and needs of class-privileged White women, and antiracism squarely around those of class-privileged Black men.

Crenshaw is clear in her early writing on intersectionality that while her initial analysis emerged from and centered on the experiences of Black women, the theory is a dynamic tool for the analysis of subjectivity and power relations across the range of social categorizations (1989, 1991). In the years since the term was first used, intersectionality has been applied to research and scholarly analysis of numerous interlocking identity categories such as class (Block & Corona, 2014; Strand, 2014), disability (Roberts &

BRIDGING THE GAP

Jesudason, 2013; Shaw, Chan & McMahon, 2012), sexuality and gender identity (Dworkin, 2005; Monro & Richardson, 2010), race (Collins, 1998; Cuádriz & Uttal, 1999; Gillborn, 2015; Steinbugler, Press & Dias, 2006), nationality (Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Chun, Lipsitz & Shin, 2013), and age (Hearn, 2011; Warner & Brown, 2011), and in a range of fields, such as social and clinical psychology (Cole, 2009; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), marketplace diversity (Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004; Henry, 2005; Holt & Thompson, 2004), education (Ringrose, 2007; Yang, 2010), social policy (Lewis, 2000, 2005), and public health (Dworkin, 2005), to name a few. Feminist theory has continued to engage with intersectionality as a research method, a tool for analysis, and a heuristic device, though discussion continues about how best to apply intersectionality as a methodology in the field of women's studies (MacKinnon, 2013; McCall, 2005).

Contemporary intersectionality theory stands in contrast to what Nancy Fraser (1998) and others have identified as the two main perspectives on the conceptualization of marginalized groups: deconstructionist thought on one hand, which rejects categorization as socially constructed, and identity politics on the other, which uncritically maintains group boundaries in an effort to revalue them (McCall, 2005). Critics of deconstructionism argue that erasure of categories denies the social reality of categorization and its oppressive effects on people's lives, while identity politics are critiqued for seeming to "valorize differences among women without interrogating systemic inequalities among women" (McCall, 2005, p. 1789). Intersectionality attempts to take a more nuanced approach, recognizing both the need to critically interrogate the social construction of categories, and the very real social power of categorization. The scope of intersectionality is both particular and universal, providing a tool for complicating essentialized conceptions

BRIDGING THE GAP

of identity and exploring intragroup difference while acknowledging the social relations that constitute groups and structure them into hierarchies (Crenshaw, 1989). The strength of this approach is in its focus not just on “the static outcomes of the problem it brings into view,” but on the systems and dynamics of power that create those outcomes, making it an invaluable tool in the analysis of multiply marginalized yet intracategorically complex groups such as commercially sexually exploited women and the interlocking hierarchies of oppression that create and maintain their exploitation (MacKinnon, 2013).

Critiques of Intersectionality

Many critiques of intersectionality are based in mis-readings of the theory that use limited “either/or” constructs to interpret a theory that is defined by its “both/and” approach, or charge intersectionality with overlooking concepts that have long been central to intersectional theorists’ writings (May, 2014). Some critics, for example, argue that intersectionality should focus more on identity than structures (Prins, 2006; Staunæs, 2003), or that the theory overlooks structures and institutions while focusing too much on identity (Conaghan, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 2006). As Vivian May (2014) points out, positioning identity in opposition to structures and context ignores the way in which intersectionality locates identity within multiple social structures, using a conventional epistemic framework to critique a theory whose aim is to challenge such bipolar thinking and embrace more complex and novel epistemologies. Other critiques of the theory deny central tenets of intersectionality, and then assert them as “new” ideas crafted by the critics, as in Conaghan’s (2009) assertion that intersectionality focuses on “places where separate strands of inequality cross,” in contrast to her supposedly novel suggestion that, in the case of transsexuality, “what emerges is a conception of inequality in which strands

BRIDGING THE GAP

never operate separately; indeed, are always in some form, working together (p. 22).

Critiques such as these co-opt and repackage intersectionality, obscuring the origins of the theory's core concepts and suggesting what Andrea Smith (2005) characterizes as a colonizer mindset in which ideas originating within marginalized communities are there "for the taking" (as cited in May, 2014).

Other critiques of intersectionality argue that intersectionality is only about Black women, or that the origins of the theory in Black feminist literature somehow limit the theory's applicability (Staunæs, 2003). While such criticisms are clearly disproven by a more complete review of the intersectional literature, which shows the numerous ways the theory has been deployed to analyze a variety of identities and social processes, these critiques are nonetheless concerning because they deny the possibility that valuable ways of knowing could emerge from marginalized communities. As May (2014) points out, theories that originate in the experiences of women of color or other subordinated groups are always assumed to be particular, while theories that are generated by supposedly more representative group members (for example, class-privileged, White female academics) are considered universally applicable. An important feature of intersectionality is the idea that it is precisely this sort of dismissal of marginalized communities' ways of experiencing and knowing that necessitate a new framework that allows us to both understand the process by which that repudiation occurs, and challenge the notion that dominant epistemologies are the only ones available to us. In the next section, I will examine in particular the ways intersectionality challenges traditional anti-racist theories and conventional feminist analyses of violence against women that obscure and dismiss the experiences of women of color.

Intersectionality and the Invisibility of Violence Against Women of Color

As Crenshaw argued in her 1991 essay, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” antiracism’s failure to interrogate patriarchy reinforces the subordination of women, while feminism that fails to interrogate race frequently reproduces the subordination of people of color. In the United States, antiracism movements have challenged for decades the sexualized racism that casts all Black men as threats to the sanctity of White femininity, yet have often ignored or silenced accounts of sexualized racial violence against Black women (Crenshaw, 1991). An illustrative example of the differential effects of sexualized racism on Black men and Black women is a 1990 study of rape convictions in Dallas, Texas, which found that average length of sentence nearly doubled when the attacker was a Black man and the victim was of a different race, while those men convicted of raping Black women received by far the most lenient treatment (Herndon, 1990). Black men are affected by racism in a particular (and sexualized) way precisely because they are both Black and men, while Black women are uniquely marginalized not only by their gender, but by the particularity of being Black and female. Yet the determination of the Black community to defend Black men from sexualized racist attacks often obscures the plight of Black women who suffer from violence at the hands of Black men. Black women are often reluctant to embrace traditional feminist analyses of gender-based violence when doing so puts them at odds with the antiracist narrative of besieged Black masculinity (Crenshaw, 1991; Richie, 2012). When efforts have been made to bring attention to violence against Black women, these attempts have often been silenced from within the Black community for fear that discussion of these issues would reinforce negative stereotypes of African Americans

BRIDGING THE GAP

(Crenshaw, 1991). While concern about Black men's vulnerability to the criminal justice system is justified and, indeed, essential to antiracist efforts, a single-axis analysis of racism in rape law obscures the vulnerability of Black women to sexualized violence and reinforces antiracism as a movement primarily focused on the needs of Black men at the expense of women of color.

At the same time, the feminist movement, in an attempt to gain the support of political and social elites, promotes a narrative of gender-based violence that centers on the experiences of White women. As Crenshaw points out in *Mapping the Margins*, studies and anecdotes deployed by feminist anti-violence organizations

“consistently assert that battering cuts across racial, ethnic, economic, educational, and religious lines. Such disclaimers seem relevant only in the presence of an initial, widely held belief that domestic violence occurs primarily in minority or poor families...Yet these comments seem less concerned with exploring domestic abuse within ‘stereotyped’ communities than with removing the stereotype as an obstacle to exposing battering within white middle- and upper-class communities” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1259).

Violence that had remained insignificant in the minds of the public and policymakers so long as it was considered a minority problem becomes a national issue worthy of outrage when it impacts dominant social groups. So long as efforts to politicize violence against women focus on convincing Whites that this problem is their problem and not solely the concern of distant “others,” any effort to attend in an authentic way to the experiences of minority women who face gender-based violence will be seen as jeopardizing the broader goals of the movement (Crenshaw, 1991). Minoritized women and poor women disappear

BRIDGING THE GAP

from feminist conversations about gender-based violence, just as their experiences of violence are obscured by the loyalty of many antiracist organizations and academics to the defense of Black masculinity. This dynamic is evident in debates about prostitution, as well, which have typically excluded women of color and poor women “except as examples of the worst off” (Razack, 1998, p. 340). Crenshaw argues that this tokenization of minority and poor women, inherently objectifying and voyeuristic, is as harmful and silencing as complete exclusion, and precludes the discussion of strategies and policies that would effectively address minority women because their experiences are held up “simply to magnify the problem rather than to humanize their experiences” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1261).

It is not mere “inclusion” that is called for, then, but a complete re-working of the way we understand oppression and possible modes of resistance. In *Close Encounters of Three Kinds: Teaching Dominance Feminism and Intersectionality*, Crenshaw points out that the very “sameness” claim that made domestic violence a viable politicized issue “constituted ideological blinders that militated against the acknowledgment of difference in the development of effective interventions,” such that many ideological and practical dimensions to the anti-domestic violence movement “tragically underserve the needs of some survivors relative to others” (1990, p. 179). She offers the example in *Mapping the Margins* of a Latina woman who was sleeping on the streets with her son, having fled her home after her husband threatened to kill them both, yet who was repeatedly denied housing at a New York domestic violence shelter because she could not prove English proficiency and an ability to participate in a mandatory English-language support group (Crenshaw, 1991). These admittance policies, based on ideas about the importance of

BRIDGING THE GAP

survivor empowerment and engagement in one's own healing process, were nonetheless exclusionary in practice because they did not allow for the possibility that a woman in crisis might look different than the essentialized female client the shelter's administrators had imagined. Stories such as this one make clear the importance of a more nuanced, intersectional lens in both theorizing women's rights issues and developing policies and services to meet the needs of women whose rights have been violated.

Whitewashing prostitution. An intersectional lens sheds light on some of the more problematic approaches of many anti-trafficking organizations and media campaigns that analyze sex-trafficking and pimp-controlled prostitution along the single axis of gender, obscuring the role of race and class. A major national anti-trafficking nonprofit, for example, proclaims on their website that "human trafficking spans all demographics" (Polaris, "Human Trafficking," 2014, para. 12), which, while not an inaccurate statement, echoes the efforts of the anti-domestic violence movement to appeal to social elites through the "sameness" approach, in this case by obscuring the disproportionate representation of women of color and poor women among those trafficked. Another anti-trafficking organization, The A21 Campaign, takes this whitewashing a step further in the "Survivor Stories" section of the website, illustrating each story with a photograph of a slender young White woman (The A21 Campaign, "Survivor Stories," 2014). The media's depiction of sex trafficking is similarly heavy-handed, focusing almost exclusively on sensationalized portrayals of White, "girl next door" victims in stories whose sole purpose seems to be to galvanize collective outrage from White, middle- and upper-class parents. The 2011 Vanity Fair article "Sex Trafficking of Americans: The Girls Next Door" uses descriptors like, "4-H girl," and "diminutive blonde with fine, even features" to describe the victims of its

harrowing tale, emphasizing their whiteness and aligning them with a “good girl” narrative to stress their innocence (Collins, 2011, p. 5). A poor, prostituted woman of color examining these narratives might well conclude that she is not the kind of victim with whom these agencies are concerned.

Efforts at universalizing and whitewashing the issue of prostitution through a discourse of sex trafficking packaged to appeal to White elites reveal a preoccupation with the sanctity of virginal White womanhood (and the absence of a similar concern for the bodies of women of color) which echoes the anxious early-twentieth-century panic about “white slavery.” This panic arose at the suggestion that young White women from Europe and North America were being kidnapped and sold for prostitution to foreign men in Asia, South America, and Africa—a phenomenon that turned out to be far less widespread than popularly depicted (Chuang, 2010). Indeed, some historians have theorized the “white slavery” phenomenon as largely a moral panic motivated by possessive patriarchal investment in the chastity of White women and racist fears about “the perceived links between prostitution and disfavored minorities” (Nadelmann, 1990, p. 514-515). This anxiety resurfaces in sensationalized modern media accounts of sex trafficking, which implore White elites to protect their children from such a fate. Yet it is specifically White women who are to be protected from violation in these narratives, and not women of color.

The myths of White female chastity and sexually deviant Black femininity. The unequal valuing of women’s bodies is at the heart of the racialized and classed dimensions of prostitution that are so often overlooked, as they have been overlooked in debates about other forms of sexual violence. Historically, arguments for protecting women from sexual violation have focused on property-like aspects of White women’s chastity. Proponents of

BRIDGING THE GAP

“sexual stratification” theory suggest that dominant men assume a right of sexual access to the most socially desirable women, who tend to be members of socially privileged groups (White, middle- and upper-class) (Collins, 1971). Because of dominant men’s property interest in the chastity of White, class-privileged women (the mechanism by which the privileged classes reproduce their own power), the chastity of these socially privileged women must be protected from violation by socially subordinate men. The structuring of these property rights reflects the unequal valuing of women’s bodies in our society, for, as Valerie Smith argues, “[t]o the extent that rape is constructed as a crime against the property of privileged white men, crimes against less valuable women—women of color, working-class women, and lesbians, for example—mean less or mean differently than those against white women from the middle and upper classes” (Smith, 1990, p. 275-276). In *Rape and Criminal Justice: The Social Construction of Sexual Assault* (1989), Gary LaFree found that while Black men accused of raping White women were punished most harshly, Black men who were accused of raping Black women were treated the most leniently, even after controlling for factors such as physical injury to the victim and familiarity between offender and victim. The dismissal of violence against Black women makes clear that it is not only Black men who are victimized by the structural, sexualized racism of our criminal justice system. On the contrary, the violation of Black women is actually obscured by the legal system’s focus on punishing Black men for transgressing the presumed sexual property rights of patriarchal elites.

Institutional efforts at regulating female sexuality have focused on guarding White women’s chastity while constructing Black women as sexually deviant. Early rape legislation emphasized proof of an accuser’s chastity as the primary determinant of her

BRIDGING THE GAP

victimhood, yet some states went so far as to explain to juries that Black women, unlike White women, were not presumed to be chaste (Crenshaw, 1989). This hypersexualization of Black women appears in landmark works of Western thought from the colonial age through the present day. One need only look to Freud's "dark continent" of female sexuality to observe the linkage of sexually active women with Black colonial Africa and its supposed sexual exoticism and pathology (as cited in Gilman, 1985, p. 238). This link is so entrenched in dominant narratives that Black women have long been conflated with prostituted women in the White imagination. Nineteenth century eugenicists merged perceptions of prostituted women and Black women to the point that popular and pseudo-scientific depictions of prostituted women portrayed them with physiological and character traits that had long been attributed only to the supposedly primitive and hypersexual Black woman, such as elongated labia majora, large buttocks, and supposedly "masculine" jaws and facial features (Gilman, 1985; Razack, 1998). The conflation of prostitution with Blackness also racializes and sexualizes poor women, who themselves exist outside the margins of virtuous middle class respectability, occupying instead the perceived degeneracy and disorder of the slum where even White bodies can slip toward Blackness by association with sexuality and filth (Goldberg, 1993; Roberts, 1994). As Razack points out, a woman walking down the street in a suburban neighborhood will rarely be assumed to be selling sex, while a woman walking in a poor area is much more likely to be read as a prostituted woman simply because she is located in a space where sexual availability is assumed (Razack, 1998). Women of color, however, can rarely "leave the space of prostitution in the White imagination; it is a space worn on the body" (Razack, 1998, p. 356). This is exemplified by a recent news story in which a young Black actress

was detained by Los Angeles police after being “mistaken for a prostitute” while kissing her White boyfriend in public (Boren, 2014). Simply being Black and female marked her as outside the moral order and scripted her as “a prostitute” in the White imagination. In *Putting Prostitutes in Their Place: Black Women, Social Violence, and the Brazilian Case of Sirlei Carvalho* (2014), Christen Smith echoes Razack’s argument that Black women, by virtue of their combined race and gender, are scripted in the popular imagination as “prostitutes,” and that their bodies “are seen as violable in part because black femaleness is always already marked as outside the social contract and thus, by extension, outside the moral social order” (Smith, 2014, p. 108).

Invisibility of violence against racialized women. An intersectional analysis reveals that racist assumptions about Black women’s purportedly unbridled and indecent sexuality continue to shape the way Black women’s claims of sexual victimization are treated. While White rape victims who lead sexually autonomous lives also experience the oppressive effects of the good woman/bad woman dichotomy that privileges chastity as an indicator of innocence, our social construction of sexual violence not only penalizes sexually autonomous behavior, but also devalues women who belong to racial groups within which promiscuity is perceived to be common. Black women are cast as bad women within societal narratives about chaste, good women who can be raped and impure, bad women who cannot (Crenshaw, 1991). A study of reported rapes in Oakland, California in 1989 found that 24.4% of rape cases were classified as “unfounded” (Cooper, 1990). The vast majority of these cases involved poor, Black complainants, many of whom abused substances or were prostituted. Sexist expectations of female chastity combine with racist assumptions of Black women’s sexual promiscuity to obscure the possibility that poor,

BRIDGING THE GAP

Black women could be victims of sexual violence—let alone that prostituted women could be sexually victimized. While Black women and White women have a shared interest in challenging the Madonna/whore dichotomy, they experience its oppressive effects differently due to the racialization of perceived sexual virtue and sexual deviance, which ensures that some bodies (the bodies of poor women, women of color, and prostituted women, for example) exist to absorb sexual violence.

If Black women cannot be raped, it is little wonder that Black prostituted women in particular so often find their rape claims dismissed. After all, if women who lead sexually independent lives are less likely to be vindicated by the courts if raped, then women who exist entirely outside the socially acceptable construction of female sexual behavior hardly stand a chance. The shocking statistics about murders, rapes, and violent assaults of prostituted women are continually questioned, discredited, or chalked up to exaggeration (Chuang, 2010; Doezema, 2000; Weitzer, 2011), because as the epitome of “bad women,” prostituted women cannot claim victim status and must silently absorb male violence. Just as accounts of violence against Black women are often silenced or denounced, the long history of violence against prostituted women by police, johns, pimps, and others is largely silent. When all Black female bodies occupy the space of prostitution in the White imagination, and all prostituted female bodies take on the characteristics of racial “others,” membership in either group becomes a proxy for membership in the other. Not only are these women denied the ability to claim victimhood when they are the targets of sexual violence, but the routine victimization of prostituted women through commercial sexual exploitation is obscured and normalized as a predictable expression of their sexual degeneracy. To understand the prostitution of women of color as violence in and of itself

BRIDGING THE GAP

requires not only an acknowledgment of the gendered power relations that create and manifest themselves in prostitution, but recognition of the uniquely sexualized racist assumptions that deny women of color and prostituted women the opportunity to claim the identity of victim or survivor rather than deviant.

The normalized exploitation of racialized and sexualized women naturalizes prostitution for certain women whose bodies are presumed to exist to absorb male aggression. These women, largely poor women and women of color, do not appear in accounts of chosen, professional prostitution by class-privileged White women. The prostitution lobby, as Razack points out, speaks only with the voice of those who have the true option to prostitute or not to prostitute—women who are privileged but for their gender (1998). Those with multiple subordinated identities, who make up the masses of prostituted women, have the least bargaining power both in commercial sexual transactions and in the political sphere. Their voices, largely absent from accounts of voluntary prostitution, or arguments for the legalization of the commercial sex trade, are silenced by the interactions of race, class, and gender oppression. Much as anti-domestic violence groups that claim to represent “women” have largely failed to represent the experiences of women of color or poor women and so have failed to meet the needs of non-White and lower-class communities, prostitution advocates position themselves as representative of “sex workers,” yet largely fail to represent the experiences of prostituted women whose experiences are substantially different from those of the relatively privileged few granted a seat at the table. To truly challenge the assumptions that justify and sustain prostitution, we must shift from the neoliberal focus on individual choice versus individual coercion that depoliticizes prostitution, unmoors gender and race theory

BRIDGING THE GAP

from their commitments to social justice, and distracts from radical critiques of power relations that create and sustain prostitution. The logic that individual agency is the solution to all societal ills undercuts the political solidarity that has been the underpinning of struggles for feminist and racial justice (Mohanty, 2013), in the case of prostitution by pitting class- and race-privileged “sex workers” against those whose bodies are scripted for prostitution and denying the role of interlocking systemic oppressions in creating the differing circumstances of their exploitation. To address the issue of prostitution in a way that is liberatory for all women, we must move toward an intersectional analysis and critique of the forces of power that define, rank, and oppress women according to race, class, and gender hierarchies, consigning some to prostitution so that others may live lives of lesser violence. The question of whose voices make up the coalitions that address such violence against women is not a petty question, as Crenshaw reminds us: “[i]n the context of violence, it is sometimes a deadly serious matter of who will survive—and who will not” (1992, p. 1265).

Self-Definition and Self-Valuation as Liberatory Tactics

In her writings on intersectional theory and Black feminist thought, Patricia Hill Collins (1986) has stressed the importance of self-definition and self-valuation as forms of resistance that challenge internalized oppression. Collins, writing particularly about Black women, describes self-definition as the process of rejecting stereotypes that serve to control and dehumanize Black women, which are usually distorted depictions of those elements of Black femininity that are seen as threatening to White patriarchy. Self-definition challenges not only the content of the stereotypes, but the very assumption that people in positions of power have any authority to establish these stereotypes. Self-

BRIDGING THE GAP

valuation, a related but distinct concept, addresses the content of these self-definitions, such as ways that Black females may choose to embrace and value those aspects of Black femininity that are stereotyped and maligned in academic scholarship and the popular media. Collins argues that this type of self-valuation challenges some of the most basic concepts used to control dominated groups, while strengthening qualities that allow Black women to “survive in and transcend the harsh environments that circumscribe so many Black women’s lives” (1986, p. S18). The concept of self-valuation holds great promise as a means by which prostituted women can reject patriarchal, racist, and classist stereotypes and strengthen the parts of themselves that promote survival and empowerment. Self-valuation will be explored in greater detail in Chapter V, where I consider ways this mode of resistance might be employed by marginalized women in prostitution.

The preceding chapter has explored the interlocking power of structural oppressions that contribute to the marginalization of women of color and poor women, and the invisibility of violence against racialized women in prostitution. No analysis of prostitution and the women engaged in it is complete, however, without an examination of the way the human mind develops, seeks connection, and undergoes change and healing. The next chapter will examine relational psychoanalytic theories of how the mind and one’s intrapsychic experience are shaped by complex interactions with others, and in particular by experiences of violence and misattunement. The chapter will present a brief review and analysis of selected concepts from relational psychoanalytic thought, critiques and limitations of the relational movement in psychoanalysis, and implications of this approach for clinical work with prostituted women.

CHAPTER IV

Relational Psychoanalytic Theory

A new tradition in American psychoanalysis has emerged over the last three decades, bringing together concepts from the object relations, interpersonal, and intersubjective schools of psychoanalytic thought as well as psychoanalytic feminism and social constructivism to form what is generally known as relational psychoanalysis. Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) used the term *relational* to bridge the traditions of object relations, as advanced by contemporary British psychoanalytic theory, and the concept of interpersonal relations developed by Harry Stack Sullivan, Erich Fromm, and Clara Thompson in the 1930s and 1940s. In its original usage, the term was a retrospective classification of theoretical approaches that purportedly diverged from classical psychoanalysis by rejecting drive theory and placing relationships center stage (although, as examined briefly below, drive theory itself contained distinctly relational elements). Since that time, the term relational has come to stress “relation not only between and among external people and things, but also between and among internal personifications and representations” (Ghent, 1992, p. xx). The use of the word relational has evolved to designate a contemporary conceptual space within American psychoanalysis grounded “in the fertile tension between the intrapsychic and the interpersonal, which had been previously dichotomized in the classical and interpersonal traditions” (Mitchell & Aron, 1999, p. xviii).

BRIDGING THE GAP

This chapter will begin with a brief review of the evolution of relational concepts in psychoanalytic thought, and will then outline several ideas central to the contemporary relational movement in psychoanalysis, including a review of Jessica Benjamin's feminist intersubjective theory. Limitations and critiques of the theories will also be briefly discussed, along with implications for prostitution discourse. A more thorough exploration of implications of relational concepts for mental health treatment with prostituted women will follow in Chapter V.

Relational Roots in Psychoanalysis

While some relational theorists advance relational concepts as a break from Freudian drive theory and an emphasis on fixed intrapsychic structures (Mitchell, 1988), some decidedly relational concepts can be found in Freud's writings. Freud's theory of drives emphasized that the primary impetus of a drive is to seek human relatedness to fulfill its goal, and he expounded on the process of identification as "the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (as cited in Mills, 2005). Freud even went so far as to assert that, "[i]n the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved...so from the very first individual psychology...is at the same time social psychology" (as cited in Mills, 2005). It could be argued that implicitly relational concepts were critical to Freud's theories of psychological organization, though it is precisely these interpersonal elements of his theories that have often been overlooked by subsequent theorists.

Further developments along the relational trajectory in psychoanalysis can be found in early interpersonal theory. Sullivan believed that personality is performative rather than fixed, and that humans manifest themselves differently in different contexts based on learned modes of interaction. Analysts, too, are inherently social in Sullivan's perspective,

BRIDGING THE GAP

and engage in the analysis not as the classical blank screen, but as a “participant observer,” embedded in and inextricable from the analytic dyad, necessarily influencing and influenced by the analysand (Sullivan, 1948). He also introduced a concept of self as occurring in “me-you patterns,” which foreshadow later conceptualizations of relational configurations. Sullivan theorized that infants develop “good me,” “bad me,” and “not me” self states, with the “good” and “bad” selves incorporating themselves into the child’s experience of “me-ness,” while the self that arouses extreme anxiety in the mother and so overwhelms the infant with anxiety is dissociated as “not me” and remains unintegrated and unsymbolized (Aron & Lechich, 2012). This theory of self states contrasts with Freud’s theory of a fixed intrapsychic structure, and plays a significant role in contemporary relational models of intrapsychic processes that emphasize multiplicity, dissociation, and multiple self states.

When object relations and attachment theory began to develop a presence in the United States in the 1970s, they fueled the growth of a branch of psychoanalysis that focused on the primacy of relationships in the development of the mind. Bowlby focused on infants’ innate, instinctual drive to connect with their caregivers, and focused on attachment and interaction with early caregivers as the primary organization for psychological experience. Klein and Fairbairn focused on the internal objects, “the residues of the analysand’s earlier experiences with others” (Mitchell, 1988, p. 34), that shape current experiences of self and other. Kohut and Winnicott emphasized the development of a cohesive, authentic sense of self based on early experiences of attunement by the primary caregiver to the infant’s needs. Contemporary relational theory draws on Kohut’s and Winnicott’s attention to the self as contingent on the facilitation of significant others,

BRIDGING THE GAP

Klein's and Fairbairn's focus on the object in the analysands' lives, and Sullivan's and Bowlby's emphasis on interactional patterns to form what Mitchell (1988) termed the "relational matrix" (Aron & Lechich, 2012). This matrix, comprised of the three poles of self organization, object ties, and transactional patterns, allows the analyst to hold the dialectical tension between intrapsychic and interpersonal processes.

Contemporary Relational Psychoanalytic Theory

In his 1988 book *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis*, Mitchell brought together diverse theoretical traditions to bring out their common relational core and propose a relational perspective that could guide an understanding of the dynamic unconscious as well as the analyst's role in psychoanalysis. Since then, relational theory has been expanded upon by numerous contemporary theorists to create a theoretical tradition and clinical approach grounded in relational concepts. The relational tradition that has emerged in American psychoanalysis since the mid-1990s is comprised of shared "concerns, concepts, approaches, and sensibilities," operating "as a shared subculture within the more general psychoanalytic culture, not by design, but because it has struck deep, common chords among current clinical practitioners and theorists in this country" (Mitchell & Aron, 1999, p. xii). Central concepts of contemporary relational theory include the relational matrix, multiplicity of self-states, the analytic "third" as a contrast to the complementarity of doer/done-to, transference and enactments as jointly constructed by analysand and analyst, and the role of the analyst as a bridge between unintegrated self-states.

The relational matrix not only offers a new model for understanding the analysand's dynamic unconscious, but transforms the analyst's role from that of blank screen reflecting

BRIDGING THE GAP

and interpreting the analysand's intrapsychic conflicts to an active participant in a real interpersonal relationship whose authenticity and emotional honesty are central to the analytic work. Mitchell (1988) argues that because the human mind develops from the earliest days of infancy in the context of continual interaction with others, there is no sense of self in isolation from relations with others, and there can be no psychologically meaningful sense of the other without a "sense of oneself in relation to it" (p. 33).

Furthermore, he posits, "[n]either the self nor the object are meaningful dynamic concepts without presupposing some sense of psychic space in which they interact, in which they do things with or to each other" (p. 33). This interpersonal space, present from infancy, is comprised of recurring patterns of mutual regulation and influence between child and caregiver that lead to the formation of fixed principles that organize the child's subsequent experiences with others. The analysand's organizing principles developed through early interactions shape the analytic relationship, as the analyst cannot avoid being situated within the analysand's relational matrix, and instead must discover her- or himself within these habitual interactive patterns and engage with the analysand in a collaborative effort to understand their unique intersubjective field—and, in the case of painful patterns of interaction, to find new ways of engaging.

In this model of internal organization, intrapsychic conflict is not a product of disavowed instinctual drives, but of unintegrated affect states or self-states that failed to evoke an attuned response from the caregiver early in life and so are experienced as threatening not only to the child's psychological organization, but to the preservation of interpersonal ties that are vital to survival (Stern, 2010; Stolorow, Brandchaft, & Atwood, 1987). The child learns that some behaviors and aspects of self are met with parental

BRIDGING THE GAP

approval, which increase the child's sense of interpersonal safety, while other behaviors arouse intense anxiety in the caregiver, and so overwhelm the infant with anxiety (Howell, 2006; Sullivan, 1953). These parts of the self experienced as intolerable to the caregiver are dissociated to avoid loss of the primary relationship and feelings such as self-hatred and shame (Stern, 2010). These unintegrated self-states, walled off through dissociative defenses to protect against retraumatization, reappear in the analytic dyad in what has traditionally been termed "resistance," but which Benjamin (2004) reinterprets as a failure of attunement on the part of the analyst that prevents the analysand from feeling "safely taken into the analyst's mind" (p. 28). These enactments inevitably arouse the same feelings of shame experienced in the traumatic misattunement with the early significant other, and it is vital that the analyst anticipate and attune to the intense shame and dread that organize the analysand's dissociated self-states in order to engage them with deep acceptance. This approach to the analytic relationship has particularly significant implications for psychotherapy with survivors of trauma (especially childhood trauma), because of its emphasis on inviting into the therapeutic relationship the multiple dissociated self-states and self-object representations associated with the analysand's traumatic experiences in order to restore the linkages between them (Davies & Frawley, 1994). The ability to integrate these conflicting narratives of self without collapsing them into each other, to hold them in mind simultaneously, is seen as a significant achievement in psychotherapy (Bromberg, 2006). Initially, however, the analyst must serve as a "relational bridge" (Howell, 2006) between the dissociated parts of the analysand's self to facilitate their gradual integration.

BRIDGING THE GAP

When parts of the self are understood to be dissociated, enactments can be seen as the inevitable result of the meeting of two subjectivities in which certain self-states cannot yet be symbolized, and so evade reflection and mentalization. The analyst finds her- or himself drawn affectively into the analysand's relational matrix in ways that may not be recognizable until after they have occurred (Bass, 2003; Black, 2003; Maroda, 1998). Enactments are understood to be communications (often nonverbal) from the analysand about her or his dissociated self-states (Bromberg, 2006), but while analyst and analysand are engaged in an enactment they find themselves locked into polarized roles in which one seems to be the "doer" and the other feels "done-to" (Benjamin, 1998; 2004). Benjamin refers to this binary form of interaction as complementarity. Complementary interactions take on the flavor of a tug-of-war between two participants occupying opposing roles (victimizer-victim, giver-taker, subject-object), in which roles can be reversed but not altered (Benjamin, 2004). A consequence of being stuck in complementary "twoness" is that each partner feels "done to" by the other, rather than feeling like an active agent co-creating a shared understanding (Benjamin, 2004). The particularity of these polarized roles emerges from the unique set of organizing principles and interactional expectations of analyst and analysand, the intersubjective field of which they are a part. When such enactments can be recognized and acknowledged by the analyst, disruptions in the analytic relationship can be repaired and new interpersonal experiences are generated (Wachtel, 2008). It is this mutual effort to understand the interplay between transference and countertransference and expand the analysand's interactional repertoire that is understood to be "the crucible of analytic change" in relational psychodynamic theory (Mitchell, 1988).

BRIDGING THE GAP

This collaborative effort to recognize the patterns of relating in which analyst and analysand are engaged, accept mutual responsibility for these patterns, and open a dialogue to explore their mutual influence, creates a space of “thirdness” that is another central concept of relational psychoanalytic theory. The “third” is a concept in psychoanalysis that has taken on a variety of connotations and is defined somewhat inconsistently across schools of psychoanalysis (see Mitchell & Aron, 1999 for a review of the concept of the third), but which is often understood as something co-created by, yet distinct from, the analytic dyad, which creates the psychic space necessary for reflexive awareness that dismantles complementarity. In complementary interactions, there is often the appearance that only two options exist: resistance or submission to the other’s demand (Ogden, 1994). The concept of the third offers an alternative, suggesting that to break free of complementarity the analyst must be willing to honestly examine his or her own role in painful impasses and enactments, and find an authentic way to take responsibility for that role. This involves not self-blame, but an acceptance of the inevitability—and, indeed, the necessity—of these breakdowns in the therapeutic relationship as part of the ongoing process of rupture and repair that is believed to be at the heart of therapeutic action (Mitchell, 1988; Wachtel, 2008). In surviving breakdown into complementarity and restoring dialogue by accepting responsibility and revealing her or his own vulnerability, the analyst effectively demonstrates a path out of helplessness to the analysand and restores a sense of morality, fairness, and security in the dyad (Benjamin, 2004). In the space of the analytic third, both analyst and analysand can move outside the exchange of blame and collaboratively engage in dialogue to co-create richer, more flexible ways of organizing experience and engaging in the interpersonal field.

Jessica Benjamin's Feminist Intersubjective Theory and Implications for Prostitution Discourse. Benjamin (1988, 1998) engages extensively with the idea of complementarity, particularly as it pertains to gendered power dynamics. Her focus on dismantling polarity has implications for prostitution discourse, where both sides of the traditional feminist debate use a focus on the individual to anchor their claims. "Sex work" advocates tend to speak of choice, agency, and personal freedoms, couching their support of the commercial sex trade (and its legalization and regulation) in the language of the empowered individual selecting a career path. Opponents of the commercial sex trade often frame their arguments in terms of individual victimhood and psychological trauma, locating harm in the isolated intrapsychic realm. While both proponents and opponents of prostitution sometimes point to the structural and systemic violence that marks certain groups of people for prostitution, the focus tends to be on individual (or composite) acts of violence and transgression or on individual empowerment and freedom. Benjamin's (1988) intersubjective theory pushes back against our culture's focus on the individual, placing the interplay between social power structures and intrapsychic structures at the heart of her work on gender and domination. She argues that to truly understand domination, we must understand the way it is "anchored in the hearts of those who submit to it," exploring the complex ways that gendered passivity and submission are inculcated in women through both the relational process of intrapsychic development that begins in infancy, and the cultural processes that normalize and reify the subjugation of all that is gendered feminine (p. 52). Benjamin examines in great depth the way in which desire for communion and mutual recognition with the other can become submission when gender identity is developed as though male and female are two opposing sides of an interlocking

BRIDGING THE GAP

whole, in which women's perceived "lack" (of the phallus that symbolizes desire, power, and subjectivity) defines her role both in her own mind and in our societal narratives about subjects, objects, and power.

Benjamin (1988) demonstrates how Freud's Oedipus complex authorizes idealization of the father and denigration of the mother by framing the father and the phallic symbol of separation, desire, and power as the only protection against engulfment by the mother and a return to the "oneness" and "limitless narcissism" of infancy (p. 135). Benjamin points out that what is downplayed in Freud's reading of the Oedipus story and his development of the Oedipus complex is the defensive nature of the idealization of the father that masks the child's fear of his power. In most readings of the Oedipus complex, the feared, archaic mother lures the child toward regression while the progressive, oedipal father bars the way, yet Benjamin argues that we are left to wonder why the child's fantasy would pit a primitive mother against a mature father, rather than finding the primal aspects of each parent as well as their more developed, differentiated aspects. She suggests that the child longs to know the father who represents separation and the outside world in his otherness from the mother, but dares not seek to know him as long as he is perceived as powerful and threatening, and so displaces the danger onto the mother. At this stage, boys face the challenge of differentiating themselves from mother in order to develop a masculine identity, and are particularly drawn to identification with the defensively idealized father. The fearful mother, meanwhile, must be resisted or conquered, for the allure of the idealized primal oneness of infancy continues to call to him. This, Benjamin points out, can be understood as the beginning of the image of woman as dangerous siren, the desirable object who must be withstood or conquered by the masterful subject (1988).

BRIDGING THE GAP

Girls, meanwhile, face a different challenge in Benjamin's theory of intersubjective identity formation. Where boys struggle to differentiate themselves from mother by repudiating her, girls are faced with no obvious means by which to disidentify from mother and tend rather to fear separateness. To the extent that the mother has sacrificed her own subjectivity (a common occurrence in our culture, which promotes the image of the selfless mother devoid of sexual agency), the daughter can find no subjectivity with which to identify. Rather, girls often come to realize that the selfhood available to them is based on self-sacrifice. An adult who does not embody subjectivity cannot fully survive her child's destruction (in the Winnicottian sense), and girls often sense that distancing themselves from mother would destroy the internalized mother. Instead, closeness is maintained through compliance. Yet girls, too, are faced with the binary opposition between the father of independence and the mother of dependency. Girls who do attempt to identify with the "outside" father during the preoedipal phase often find their attempts at identification rebuffed by a father whose own continuing need to assert difference from women presents a barrier to recognition of his daughter. He is more likely, Benjamin suggests, "to see her as a sweet adorable thing, a nascent sex object" (1988, p. 109). Consequently, little girls often are unable to use their connection with the father in the way boys can, and so are pushed back to the mother, relinquishing their claim to desire. Continuity and merging are emphasized at the expense of individuality and autonomy, making it difficult for the girl to disentangle her wishes and needs from those of her mother. This alienation of desire and subordination of the girl's wants to her mother's sets the stage for submission in adult erotic relationships, in which her vicarious satisfaction through her partner repeats the vicarious pleasure of the self-sacrificing mother. Even when the wish to identify with the

BRIDGING THE GAP

father is satisfied, it can lead to problems with identity under our current system of gender hierarchy; identification with the father's agency and desire conflict with the image conveyed in our culture of women as sexual objects, and with the girl's maternal identification that is likely absent sexual subjectivity.

In both the casting-off of femininity and the relinquishing of desire, the possibility of mutual recognition in its true sense—Benjamin argues this entails recognition of both likeness and difference—is denied. The polarity of early gender identifications reduces recognition to “one-sided differentiation” in which we cannot recognize the other in ourselves, identifying sameness through difference. The man who seeks to dominate women cannot recognize himself in the object of desire who is herself deprived of subjectivity, for doing so would destroy the self. He is left “with isolation as the only alternative to being engulfed by the dehumanized other” (Benjamin, 1988, p. 65). The objectified woman, alienated from her own subjectivity and entitlement to desire, is left to envy and idealize the traits embodied by the father, and seek out relationships with others who embody her absent desire and agency. This can be seen as a search for another chance at an ideal love in which her own desire and subjectivity can be recognized, but all too often these relationships take on a cast of subordination because they occur through identification with the ideal rather than mutual recognition between two subjects, and are rigidified into the complementarities of active/passive, subject/object.

Rather than seeing these masculine and feminine roles as inherent to men and women respectively, Benjamin argues that they are the result of gendered roles internalized by parents, reinforced by cultural gender expectations, and performed in the home (determining who is the primary caregiver, who is associated with the outside

BRIDGING THE GAP

world) in ways that profoundly influence the developing child's understanding of his or her own gender and relationship with desire. As an increasing number of families raise children in homes where the stereotypical Western gender roles of active male breadwinner and passive female homemaker are challenged (women as primary earners, men as central caretakers, same sex couples with a variety of role divisions), it remains to be seen how early childhood processes of identification and differentiation may shift. Yet for now, our culture continues to relentlessly objectify women in the media and push back against women's efforts at claiming their subjectivity around issues such as abortion and contraception, making it difficult for any child, no matter how flexible her identifications, to remain uninfluenced by cultural images of the passive female object of desire. Benjamin proposes that to break this cycle, we must be able to raise children who can identify with the subjectivity of each of their parents, and create a culture shift in which the broader society reflects this increased capacity to recognize both women and men as subjects. Within the family structure, each parent must be a subject in his or her own right, in touch not only with the child's needs but also attentive to his or her own wishes, needs, and desires. Beyond individual family dynamics, we must learn as a culture to value both independence and connectedness, so that not only parents but society as a whole can support children in identifying with the holding, containing, and empathic parts of their parents as well as aspects of rationality and separateness.

A challenge to the realization of this paradigm shift, Benjamin argues, is the mystification of gendered power dynamics at the societal level through rationalization. Benjamin (1988) points out that social theorists since Weber have seen rationality—the reduction of the social world to calculable, abstract, and depersonalized processes of

BRIDGING THE GAP

interaction—as the hallmark of modern thought. Formal principles such as commodity exchange take the place of social recognition. These principles of objectivity, rationality, and autonomy may appear gender neutral at first glance, yet we have seen that it is precisely autonomy, rationality and objective indifference to personal need that are understood to be the trademarks of masculine dominance. If, at the individual level, the mother represents irrationality and undifferentiation while the father represents rationality and separateness, then at the social level we can see that “[i]t is precisely the pervasive depersonalization, the banishment of nurturance to the private sphere, that reveal the logic of male dominance, of female denigration and exclusion” (Benjamin, 1988, p. 187). This critique destabilizes the notion that the rational, autonomous individual is a neutral one, and so a universal one. If the rational subject is specifically masculine, then his claim to universality falls flat, and if he develops his sense of identity by splitting off “certain human capabilities, called feminine, and by refusing to recognize the subjectivity of this feminine other, then his claim to stand for equality, liberty, free thought, and recognition of the other is also invalidated” (Benjamin, 1988, p. 189).

When viewed through the lens of this feminist intersubjective critique of rationalization, prostitution comes into focus as a highly gendered form of commercial transaction in which gender and class domination are readily apparent. If even non-commercial erotic relationships are often haunted by the specter of the subject/object relationship, the commercial sexual transaction stands out starkly as an encounter in which a subject (typically gendered masculine) purchases the right to assert his agency and desire in relation to a commodified object of desire (typically gendered feminine) who is denied subjectivity. In this transaction, the male subject is offered the kind of omnipotent control

BRIDGING THE GAP

he seeks to fend off his fear of re-engulfment and undifferentiation, while the objectified woman is denied authorship and places the satisfaction of the other ahead of her own. Sexual union is stripped of the element of attunement between two subjects, and mutual recognition becomes impossible. In this framework, prostitution is the ultimate rationalization of intimacy, and arguments in favor of legalized “sex work” simply adopt the trappings of masculine objectivity and abstraction in which the impersonal exchange of capital displaces the importance of social recognition. Yet the opposing side of the debate, in its focus on the violence of individual (or aggregated) men against prostituted women also obscures the way in which male domination “works through the hegemony of impersonal organization,” as though the problem of interpersonal domination of women by men can be solved without addressing the way male power is expressed through our very frameworks of justice and equality, with their emphasis on impersonality and “formal rules that refer to the hypothetical interaction of autonomous individuals” (Benjamin, 1988, p. 216).

Critiques and Limitations of Relational Psychoanalytic Thought

As mentioned earlier, it is important to note the decidedly White, middle class, heteronormative bias of Benjamin’s (1988, 1998) theory of subordination, and of psychoanalysis more generally, as this has implications for the applicability of these theories to clinical work with oppressed populations. Benjamin (1988) herself, as noted above, points out the challenge of applying classical developmental theories to family structures wherein parents do not fit the heteropatriarchal roles of male/father/breadwinner and female/mother/caregiver, and suggests that future research should aim to shed light on the ways that differently gendered family structures challenge

BRIDGING THE GAP

or adhere to her theory of the oedipal situation. Yet while she makes this concession, Benjamin does little to trouble the presumption that her default subject is White and middle class. Her theory artfully names and challenges the patriarchal notions embedded in classical psychoanalysis, which itself emerged out of a Eurocentric and class-privileged set of assumptions about family, culture, and the individual, but she largely takes for granted the profoundly raced and classed aspects of the theories. This bias may limit the utility of Benjamin's construct of internalized subordination in clinical work with prostituted women of color or poor prostituted women, although Benjamin's critique of the gendering of dominant culture and its subordinating impact on women remains valuable in understanding the ways women are objectified by patriarchal hegemony, and in particular the ways women are subordinated through the rationalization and commodification of intimacy in prostitution. An intersectional critique of Benjamin's theory will be explored further in Chapter V, along with suggestions for future research to challenge the raced, classed, and heteronormative assumptions of Benjamin's theory and explore alternative intersubjective psychoanalytic frameworks.

Another critique of relational psychoanalytic thought focuses on the idea of mutual influence. Mutual influence is often misunderstood to equate to symmetry or egalitarianism in the analytic relationship, as though analyst and analysand were undergoing a mutual analysis (Mills, 2005). Mutuality, however, refers simply to the interaction of the subjective worlds of analyst and analysand and the inevitable transformation of each through that interaction. Beebe and Lachmann's (1998; 2003) dyadic systems theory describes a process by which each partner in the mother-child dyad affects the other, resulting in bidirectional modifications within the system to maintain

BRIDGING THE GAP

interactional attunement, yet they do not argue that each influences the other equally or in the same way. Similarly, the relational psychoanalytic concept of mutuality in the analytic dyad makes no claims to symmetrical influence, but acknowledges the transformation that inevitably occurs in the interaction of two subjectivities while the boundaries between the roles of analyst and analysand remain intact. Mills (2005) refers to this as proportional exchange, and Aron (1996) and Stolorow and Atwood (1996) describe the mutual influence of analyst and analysand as inherently “asymmetrical” due to the very fact of entering into a professional therapeutic relationship in which one participant seeks out the professional assistance of the other with the purported goal of alleviating suffering. Mills (2005) points out that this power differential is implicit in the word “patient,” from the Latin *patiens* (one who suffers).

Other critics assert that relational thinking, in its focus on self in relation to others, fails to do justice to the idea of individual agency and the distinctness of the self (Frie, 2003; Mills, 2005). Because relational theorists focus on an idea of the self that develops from the earliest days of infancy in relation to the significant others with whom one interacts, some argue that no room is left for concepts like an individual’s inherent nature. Others are concerned that the formulation of self as continually determined by the relational context of interactions creates a sort of endless mutability that denies the individual any power of self-determination. Yet relational and intersubjective theorists make clear that interdependence does not equate with the negation of self or individual agency. Indeed, for Benjamin (1988, 1998), to be a subject is to be the author of one’s own desire. She focuses not on a discrete and linear developmental transition from the oneness of infancy to separateness, but on the paradoxical tension between them, on a self

BRIDGING THE GAP

struggling to be recognized by the other and to recognize the other as similar and yet differentiated from oneself. Benjamin suggests that we sometimes experience paradox as painful, as though recognizing the other compromises the self, at which point we tend to relinquish paradoxical balance in favor of oppositional binaries—dependence and independence as mutually exclusive, self as distinctly alienated from the other. Stolorow and Atwood (1996) similarly suggest that the idea of an isolated mind alienated from the external world and social engagement reflects a cultural desire to disavow a set of vulnerabilities that are felt to be unbearable. Even Freud described the mind as inherently born out of and shaped by relational contexts (Mills, 2005). The relational approach does not reject the existence of an intrapsychic realm and the agency that comes with a sense of self acting upon the world—rather, it suggests that we look at the intrapsychic within the context of the interpersonal, understanding personal agency and subjectivity as constituted by the real and imagined relationships that make up our worlds.

Despite the critiques of the relational movement in psychoanalysis, and the limitations of psychoanalysis' origins, relational and intersubjective ways of thinking can offer a way out of the entrenched polarities of today's debates about prostitution, while complicating their terms by questioning the solidity of the very foundation on which they are based. With its emphasis on the third as an alternative to complementary "twoness," relational thinking encourages us to relinquish our grip on dichotomies like agent/victim, choice/coercion, subject/object, and active masculine/passive feminine in favor of a psychic space of paradox and balance in which aspects of sameness and difference can be held simultaneously. Could we, for example, consider a theory of prostitution that takes into account both women's strivings for agency, authorship, and subjectivity while granting

BRIDGING THE GAP

the hegemonic power of White supremacist heteropatriarchy, pathologized femininity, and internalized oppression their full weight in our understanding of the human psyche and its interaction with the world? Depolarizing the debates around prostitution and considering more nuanced, paradoxical inquiries into the nature of self and society could open up new possibilities for public policy, service delivery models, and approaches to treatment of the unique psychological wounds of prostitution. The following chapter will bring these relational concepts into conversation with intersectional ways of knowing in order to offer an interdisciplinary critique of the contemporary prostitution debate, and to propose avenues where the marriage of these two theoretical frameworks could provide new ways of understanding and responding to prostitution in both psychotherapy and social service provision.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

In the preceding chapters, I have reviewed the contemporary discourse around prostitution, outlined key components of intersectionality and relational psychodynamic theoretical frameworks, and briefly applied these theories to an analysis of the commercial sex trade and questions of agency and identity in prostituted women. This chapter will begin with a brief review of the major points in the prostitution debate and the concepts within intersectional theory and relational psychodynamic theory through which I will formulate an understanding of the institution of prostitution and the psychological experiences of prostituted women. Based on this framework, I will outline challenges to the current polarization of the debate surrounding prostitution, offer recommendations for clinical assessment and conceptualization of prostituted women, and suggest implications for service provision to women actively engaged in or with histories of prostitution. A composite case study will be employed to illustrate my analysis and recommendations.

Prostitution, Intersecting Oppressions, and the Relational Matrix

Academic and political prostitution discourse is characterized by a highly polarized debate in which (broadly) those who espouse “sex work” as a voluntary vocational choice are pitted against those who believe prostitution to be a form of violence against women. This discussion typically frames prostitution as a gender issue—either one of women’s freedom and empowerment to make choices about the use of their bodies, or one of

BRIDGING THE GAP

women's right to lead lives free from violence and exploitation. Polarization is further apparent in the efforts of anti-sex-trafficking movements to draw rigid lines between forced and voluntary prostitution, fueling the argument that free choice can be easily distinguished from coerced decisions or those that stem from structural marginalization, internalized oppression, or the influence of traumatic antecedents.

An intersectional analysis of prostitution complicates this polarity, challenging the notion that prostitution can be considered solely an issue of women's rights or agency and providing a framework for understanding the multiple axes along which oppression and privilege interact in complex ways. The unequal valuing of women's bodies and the ways women of color and racialized poor women are scripted as sexually available in the dominant imagination ensure that they are excluded from claims of sexual violation and exploitation, and that they are more likely to enter prostitution (Farley et al., 2004; Kaestle, 2012; Lynne, 1998), more likely to experience violence in prostitution (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994), and likely to be read as "prostitutes" even when they are not (Razack, 1998; Smith, 2014). Razack's (1998) intersectional analysis of prostitution challenges a traditional pro-"sex work" stance that frames prostitution as subversion of patriarchal hegemony by illuminating the ways that different women's bodies are differently regulated, and pointing out that racialized and poor women, already thought to occupy the space of prostitution, cannot be read as subversive when they choose to inhabit what is already assumed of them. This choice can rather be understood as influenced by and conforming to the interlocking structures of patriarchy, capitalism, and racialized imperialism.

Benjamin's (1988) intersubjective psychoanalytic theory offers a challenge to the notion of the universal feminist subject in prostitution discourse, exposing the emphasis on

BRIDGING THE GAP

autonomy, depersonalized commercial transaction, and individual choice (or lack thereof) in these debates as hallmarks of masculine dominance. Recognition of the mark of patriarchal hegemony on the very structure of our legal and justice systems (with their emphasis on neutrality and abstraction) and academic discourse (with its focus on empiricism and objectivity) calls into question the terms of the debate around the meaning of and responses to prostitution. Benjamin's (1988) theory of subordination and domination also offers a potentially useful theoretical framework for conceptualizing the gendered power dynamics at play in commercial sexual transactions.

At the intrapsychic and interpersonal levels, Benjamin's intersubjective theory and other relational psychoanalytic concepts provide a framework for understanding how the individual mind develops in relation to others, further complicating the notion of the purely autonomous subject who appears so often in prostitution discourse. Relational theorists emphasize the matrix of self, internal object representations, and interactional patterns that can help clinicians and social service providers understand the complex web of factors that influence women's choice to enter prostitution as well as the powerful internal processes that can work to keep women feeling trapped in the commercial sex trade. The relational concept of dissociated self-states offers insight into the role of trauma and neglect in creating multiple self-states, which can play a protective role in the psyche of prostituted women by keeping intolerable experiences of abuse, powerlessness, and fear out of consciousness, while sustaining women's involvement in prostitution through the conscious experience of self as an empowered subject making the active choice to prostitute. These unintegrated self-states have implications for understanding the draw of prostitution, barriers to exiting, and the psychotherapeutic process with women who have

BRIDGING THE GAP

been prostituted. The analytic dyad, for example, cannot help but be drawn into enactments involving these dissociated self-states, in which analyst and analysand find themselves locked into polarized roles that recreate the victimization experiences of prostitution and early childhood misattunements. Relational theory offers a way to understand both the process by which this occurs, as well as the way out of complementarity through the analytic third.

Relational concepts that blur the line between one's conscious sense of self and the split-off self-states that unconsciously influence one's emotions, actions, and interactions complicate the polarized prostitution debate that pits autonomy against victimhood; as examined in the case study below, victims of childhood trauma may choose to enter the commercial sex trade, but the reality of intrapsychic processes complicates notions of both victimhood and freedom of choice. An intersectional analysis of prostitution adds further complexity to the polarized discourse by exposing the powerful influence of interlocking oppressions and privilege, such that all choices to engage in prostitution are constrained by hegemonic power structures and internalized oppression. The following case study and discussion explore implications for clinical practice and social service provision for prostituted women informed by these theories. To ensure confidentiality, the case study is a composite based on multiple women with prostitution histories I have met in my clinical work, with some details drawn from case studies and research findings in the prostitution literature in order to further obscure the identities of those women.

Case Study

Brittany is a thirty year-old African American woman seeking support as she attempts to exit prostitution after twelve years in "the life." She grew up in a large

BRIDGING THE GAP

Northeastern city. Her parents divorced when she was young, and Brittany and her older brother were raised by their mother, who was verbally abusive and would often beat Brittany with a broom handle when she was angry. Brittany's mother struggled to make ends meet with a part-time job and a meager amount of public assistance, and relied heavily on a revolving cast of boyfriends for financial support. She describes being teased by other children for her dirty clothes, and, as one of only a few Black children at her school, she was taunted about the texture of her hair, her broad nose, and full lips. She remembers coming into school one day to find a banana on her desk, while the other children made "monkey noises" around her. One of Brittany's elementary school teachers, Ms. A, took to Brittany, helping her with her homework after school and letting Brittany sleep on her couch from time to time when Brittany needed to get out of the house. They remained close through Brittany's time in high school, and Brittany describes her as a positive figure in her life who always believed in Brittany's inherent goodness.

When she was twelve, Brittany was sexually abused by one of her mother's boyfriends, who warned her that if she told her mother, her mother would be furious with her and throw her out of the house. The abuse continued for over a year before the boyfriend moved away. During this time, Brittany began experiencing migraine headaches and frequent nausea. While Brittany never told her mother about the abuse, she recalls her mother frequently calling her a "slut" or a "whore" when she saw Brittany talking to a boy or putting on makeup. Brittany describes feeling as though she might as well just be a "whore," because that was all anyone thought she could be. Two brushes with the police left her with a juvenile record for shoplifting and public intoxication (she was arrested on

BRIDGING THE GAP

the shoplifting charge with White peers who had also shoplifted, but Brittany was the only one convicted).

When she was sixteen, Brittany dropped out of high school, left home, and moved to a large, Midwestern city in an attempt to get as far away from her mother as possible. She had little money saved and had difficulty finding work in a new city. She began dating a man named William, who invited her to move in with him while she got on her feet. Brittany described him as the first person who was nice to her, buying her clothes, telling her she was beautiful, and taking her out to eat. He spoke often of their exciting future together, painting a picture of a happy family with smiling children and a big house with a yard, and for the first time, Brittany could imagine a future that looked different than her past. A few months after they began living together, with finances tight and Brittany eager to repay William's kindness, William suggested that she could make good money if she would "have a little fun" with some of his friends. He told her that, if she really loved him, she would do this for him to help out with their bills. Anxious to please the man who she felt had gone out of his way to help her when she had nothing, Brittany agreed to give it a try. What she thought would be only stripping turned out to be more when two of William's friends forced her to perform oral sex. She describes feeling filthy and embarrassed, but not wanting to let William down. He assured her she had done well, and that this could be the start of a profitable future for the two of them. He would find the customers, and she would turn over her earnings to William, who would manage the money for both of them. He talked with Brittany about her goals, and promised to set aside money from her earnings to help her save up to buy a car. Sure that this was a short-term plan and a path to a stable future with William, she agreed to keep meeting with johns and

BRIDGING THE GAP

meeting their demands. William was pleased with the extra income, and would reward her with affection, new clothes, and nice dinners when she brought in enough money. Brittany felt that he had her best interests at heart, and was helping her work toward financial success.

Soon he was asking her to reach earning “quotas,” and encouraged her to solicit sex on the street to attract more johns. When she would fail to bring home enough money, William’s temper would flare. He would yell and curse at her, accusing her of stealing “his” money and sometimes even throwing her out of the house, telling her to get back out on the “track” until she reached her quota. Certain that these outbursts were somehow her fault, the result of her failure to be “sexy enough” or of her inherent “badness,” Brittany would redouble her efforts to draw in clients and go out of her way to prove to William that she was loyal and hardworking. William’s outbursts, however, became increasingly unpredictable and violent as time went on; he would slap, punch, and kick Brittany, sometimes until she was unconscious, and several times he brandished a loaded gun at her, threatening to kill her if she left him. Brittany was never sure when the abuse would occur, and describes their relationship as though there were two different Williams: the William who told her loved her, showered her with gifts, and talked about the two of them against the world, and the William who cursed her, threatened her, and beat her. Brittany’s migraines increased in frequency during this time, and she developed an oxycodone addiction in her attempt to manage her pain and anxiety. Despite numerous attempts to get sober, Brittany struggled with this addiction for the next several years, describing it as the only thing that allowed her to “numb out” from the stress of her encounters with johns and her abusive relationship with William. She was arrested twice for solicitation during

BRIDGING THE GAP

her years in street prostitution, and served several months in jail. She also reports being raped by a police officer who threatened her with arrest if she told anyone about the assault.

When I met Brittany, she was eight months pregnant, eight months sober, and had left William a few weeks earlier. She described waking up after a particularly violent beating from William that left her unconscious with three broken ribs, and deciding that she needed to get out of “the life” once and for all so that her son could grow up in a safe home and not turn out like William. She was living in a shared apartment where she paid discounted rent because the landlord knew about her situation and wanted to help. She was working for him part-time as an office assistant and relied on him for transportation because she had no car of her own, but she worried that he was becoming a little too interested in the details of her life and found his frequent “checking in” on her overbearing. William had tattooed his name on her neck, making her easily recognizable, and she was terrified of being spotted and having her whereabouts reported to him. She had thrown away her phone so he would be unable to track her location. She suffered from frequent migraines and UTIs, bouts of dizziness, and recurring pain in her neck, back, vagina, and jaw. She was regularly overwhelmed by waves of nausea, and reported feeling particularly nauseated by her own bodily fluids. Brittany was worried about giving birth and breastfeeding when her own body repulsed her. She met criteria for severe PTSD, as well as demonstrating elements of DESNOS such as chronic feelings of guilt and shame, inability to gauge the trustworthiness of others or feel intimacy in relationships, somatization, dysregulated affective impulses, and identification with her pimp’s belief system and world view that had complicated her exit from prostitution. Despite this, Brittany had begun to

BRIDGING THE GAP

tentatively believe that she could have a life free of violence and exploitation. She believed that she would need to protect and heal herself in order to offer her son the life he deserved.

Structural Oppression and Intersubjective Trauma

Brittany's childhood was characterized by verbal abuse, physical violence, and, later, sexual abuse that convinced her she was dirty, worthless, and likely to be thrown out on the streets if she spoke up for herself. The sexual abuse, and the secrecy and shame that surrounded it, instilled in Brittany a belief that she was damaged goods, cut out only for further exploitation because that was all that she deserved. Poverty and racism instilled in her a sense of otherness, and enhanced her feelings of worthlessness and shame about her body. As a runaway teen, jobless, homeless, and accustomed to abuse, Brittany could not imagine options for herself that did not involve the violence and exploitation that had characterized her life, and she was particularly vulnerable to the lure of an older man who offered her shelter, protection, and hope for the future. When the familiar patterns of abuse and exploitation resurfaced in new forms, Brittany considered them the price of intimacy and security—after all, this was the only model of relatedness that she knew. When she found herself less highly valued by johns than prostituted girls with lighter skin, she was hardly surprised after years of exposure to the prejudice of her peers and the structural racism that had kept her family in public housing, scrambling to pay off predatory loans. An intersectional and relational analysis of prostitution through the prism of Brittany's experience can shed light on the structural, interpersonal, and psychological elements that set the stage for prostitution (as an institution and as an individual path),

and that sustain both the commercial sex industry as a whole and individual women's involvement in it.

Traumatic relational matrices and the matrix of oppression. Several psychological theorists have attempted to outline the psychology of prostitution, from Freud's early theory of "polymorphous perversity" (1905/1989) to more contemporary theories of the intrapsychic landscapes of prostituted women. Some psychoanalytic theorists, for instance, assert that engagement in prostitution is motivated by feelings of anger toward the mother (Barag, 1937; Douville & Abreu, 2007), while others have argued that it is an unconscious reaction to an absent or depriving father that determines a woman's choice to enter prostitution (Choisy, 1961; Wengraf, 1943). Empirical research on psychological trauma and prostitution suggest increased vulnerability to prostitution in women who were physically or sexually abused as children (Abramovich, 2005; Farley, 2006; Mayfield-Schwarz, 2007). Van der Kolk (1989) has described how survivors of childhood trauma are driven to repeat elements of their early traumatic experiences (e.g. in exploitative interactions in prostitution) through conditioned responses to stimuli and neuroendocrinologic reactions to stress that increase their propensity to develop strong attachments to abusive partners and decrease their likelihood of extricating themselves from dangerous and exploitative relationships. Davies and Frawley (1994) connect the psychoanalytic and empirical psychological literature on childhood sexual abuse in a relational psychoanalytic model that has clinical implications for work with prostituted women with abuse histories, articulating how the chronically abused child's dissociation of the experience of abuse "becomes organized into a cordoned-off system of internalized self and object representations that protects the remainder of the personality from the

BRIDGING THE GAP

horrifying and psychically disorganizing effects of the trauma” (p. 54). The relational matrix that organizes the intrapsychic and intersubjective worlds of the adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse incorporates the abuser and the abused, the omnipotent rescuer and the needy child, the uninvolved parent and the unseen child, the seducer and the seduced, many of which are dissociated from each other, and each of which arises over and over in the survivor’s life as well as in the analytic relationship (Davies & Frawley, 1994). While not all prostituted women have experienced sexual abuse in childhood, the substantial proportion of women in the commercial sex industry who have experienced other types of chronic abuse or neglect in childhood, and the high rates of violence and exploitation in prostitution, suggest that a relational psychoanalytic model of the mind can offer a useful way of conceptualizing the unconscious, unsymbolized aspects of experience in prostituted women.

Brittany, for example, could be understood simply in relation to her diagnosis of PTSD, presumed to stem from her experiences of violence and exploitation in prostitution, but a relational psychodynamic analysis of her history offers a more nuanced understanding of both her entry into prostitution and her subsequent difficulty extricating herself from an increasingly exploitative relationship with her pimp. From an early age, Brittany learned that parts of herself (in her case, typically the parts of herself that knew and expressed her own needs) were unacceptable to her mother, and were met with anger, rejection, and sometimes physical violence. To a young child, self-states that elicit such a violent reaction from the caregiver represent a threat to continued connection to the significant other, and so to the child’s very existence. These parts of self, too dangerous to remain conscious, would have been dissociated along with the “bad” maternal response

BRIDGING THE GAP

they evoked. Her later sexual abuse at the hands of her mother's boyfriend, and her mother's unknowing (or refusal to know), would have further deepened this divide between the self that can be known and the constellation of self and object representations that remain unsymbolized. Brittany's relational matrix, then, is comprised of two mutually exclusive systems of self and object representations, one of which incorporates a sense of self, object representations, and history of interactions in which the abuse is disavowed, and one of which acknowledges and is shaped by the abuse. In one moment she is dismissive of her mother and the impact of her childhood abuse on her current sense of self and others, proud of her proven ability to survive "a tough life," and certain of her autonomy and agency at decision points throughout her life, while in the next instant she is tearful and disorganized, expressing a sense that her life has been scripted for her without her participation, feeling powerless to make choices that prioritize her own wants and needs, and confused about the sense of unreality that permeates her memories of early as well as recent abuse. While the self-state that is structured around the abuse may be split off, its forceful intrusion into the present makes clear its organizing influence in Brittany's life, such that violence and violation are the price of intimacy and loyalty to an abusive significant other makes escape from a dangerous relationship with a pimp a fraught possibility tinged with fears of betrayal and abandonment.

While these relational psychodynamic principles lend a subtlety to the psychological understanding of Brittany's situation, when applied in the absence of a broader systemic analysis they run the risk of locating all responsibility for a woman's commercial sexual exploitation within the woman herself, or her early significant others. The picture presented by the relational matrix of Brittany's life, for example, is enhanced by an

BRIDGING THE GAP

understanding of the matrix of oppression that has contributed to her sense of self and her place in the world. From a young age, Brittany was made to feel “other” than the children around her in school, learning early on that she was considered something less than human and limited to subhuman aspirations. As a poor, Black, runaway girl without a high school diploma, Brittany found herself largely unemployable. Like many poor children of color, Brittany had experienced the educational system as disinterested in the needs of a child who struggled in class and whose parents were uninvolved in her learning. While she was lucky enough to connect with a sympathetic teacher, the school system as a whole largely allowed her to slip through the cracks. Like many poor young people of color with little formal education and a history of interactions with the juvenile justice system, she found the informal economy welcomed her much more readily than the world of typed resumé, job interviews, and background checks. Add to this the psychological legacy of childhood sexual abuse and neglect, and it is easy to see how the raced and gendered nature of our economic system could have funneled Brittany into the industry that would commercialize the violation to which she was accustomed and which she believed to be her due.

Interlocking oppressions not only circumscribed Brittany’s options, but likely influenced her experiences in prostitution as well. As a poor, Black woman in prostitution, Brittany was statistically more likely to face violence in prostitution than her White counterparts in the commercial sex industry (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). Given what we know about the unequal valuing of women’s bodies along racial lines, in all likelihood Brittany would also have been less likely to be believed by police were she to report these violent attacks (Cooper, 1990; Herndon, 1990; LaFree, 1989; Richie, 2012), and she would have been more likely to be arrested and jailed for prostitution than her White counterparts

BRIDGING THE GAP

(Lucas, 1995). These experiences of violence and betrayal by pimps, johns, and police would only reinforce relational models based on early incidents of abuse and neglect, deepening Brittany's sense of herself as powerless and further constricting her sense that other ways of relating are possible. In this way, the oppression prostituted women, and particularly poor prostituted women of color, experience on multiple axes reinforces both internalized and actual positions of subordination in external power hierarchies.

Implications for social service provision. An intersectional analysis of prostitution makes clear that the legal and justice systems cannot be the only avenues through which the institution of prostitution is addressed, as those who are drawn into prostitution come primarily from poor communities and communities of color that have long been impacted by dismissal of reports of violence and abuse, disproportionately high rates of arrest and incarceration, and harsh sentencing in the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2010; Richie, 2012). Women in prostitution are further discouraged from seeking legal recourse after incidents of rape, assault, or exploitation due to the tendency of law enforcement and criminal justice institutions to dismiss the complaints of prostituted women, particularly those who are women of color, are homeless, or suffer from substance abuse (Cooper, 1990; Herndon, 1990; LaFree, 1989; Richie, 2012), as well as laws in many states that allow the admission of prostitution history as evidence of the complainant's "unchaste" tendencies in rape trials (Portlock, 2007). Portlock (2007) emphasizes the racial implications of state laws that allow the admission of prostitution evidence in rape trials, due to the overrepresentation of women of color in the types of prostitution (such as street prostitution and prostitution in drug houses) that present the highest risk of sexual violence and rape. Lucas (1995) found that women of color made up 55% of those arrested

BRIDGING THE GAP

for prostitution, and 85% of women jailed for prostitution were women of color.

Benjamin's (1988) analysis of the implicitly gendered nature of our legal and justice systems, which value masculine detachment and ideals of the isolated, autonomous individual, elucidate a further challenge to the notion that the issue of prostitution and its harms are best addressed through these mechanisms of the state. When these factors are taken into account, the need for extrajudicial interventions for prostituted women in the social service sector is clear. These alternative responses to prostitution must be better suited to the needs of multiply oppressed women and communities, and should work to counteract the gendered rationalization of traditional legal and judicial attempts at addressing prostitution. Social service approaches to prostitution, then, should be informed not only by a concern for women's rights in a general sense, but specifically by an understanding of the ways women are differently regulated and impacted by interlocking oppressions, and by a familiarity with relational concepts that illustrate the complex psychological factors that contribute to women's entry into prostitution and the challenges they face in exiting it.

To ensure that these services accurately assess and meet the needs of women who have been used in prostitution, it is vital that women with prostitution histories be central to the design and implementation of services for this population. The following suggestions for social services targeted to meet the needs of prostituted women are based in my analysis of prostitution as a White, middle class, female social work student with no personal background in prostitution, and as such should be taken with a grain of salt. It is my hope that this paper can contribute to the broader conversation about thoughtful, informed ways to support prostituted women in meeting their needs and achieving their

BRIDGING THE GAP

goals, but I strongly believe that any suggestions made by academics, practitioners, and theorists not grounded in the personal, lived reality of prostitution should be considered only in conjunction with the proposals of women who themselves have experienced prostitution. With that caveat, it is clear that social service agencies targeted to meet the needs of prostituted women must provide a wide variety of vital services, such as secure crisis and transitional housing options, assistance in the attainment of educational goals, child care, vocational training, mental health services, and case management to help women navigate the complex legal and welfare systems with which they may be involved. Program rules should not inadvertently become barriers to access for those located at the crossroads of interlocking oppressions, many of whom also experience symptoms of posttraumatic stress or other mental health issues that present challenges to scheduling and remembering appointments. To this end, bureaucratic red tape should be minimal and programming voluntary (e.g. sobriety or abstinence from prostitution should not be a necessary precursor to accessing services; women should not be required to attend support groups or other mandatory programming in order to qualify for shelter). Services should be comprehensive, to ensure prostituted women can access a full range of support services in one location, rather than facing the difficult challenge of prioritizing needs for shelter, counseling, and other vital resources when they are spread out among different agencies that may not understand the unique needs of prostituted women. To increase availability and efficacy of social services for prostituted women, they must be made geographically accessible to women with limited income and in underserved communities, and should include rigorous outreach programs and extensive referral networks to ensure that women in otherwise marginalized communities know how to access services as

BRIDGING THE GAP

needed. Services that require rigid scheduling of appointments, are only open during business hours, or that are located in inaccessible business districts present barriers to access for women who have limited income, unpredictable schedules, or operate under the watchful eyes of pimps. This means they are likely to be particularly inaccessible to women of color and poor women in prostitution who often experience restricted autonomy and mobility due to limited income or pimp-control, and who are likely to mistrust more typical social service providers due to systemic racism and classism in structures like the welfare and justice systems.

The importance of peer support for oppressed populations cannot be underestimated, and social services for prostituted women should be provided, wherever possible, in contexts that actively foster community. Community-building efforts can also foster the kind of political solidarity that counters the isolated focus on the individual in prostitution debates and allows for the development of constructive critiques of the power structures that subordinate women and legitimize prostitution. Anti-oppressive education could be incorporated into community-building efforts by agencies serving prostituted women to further challenge the assumptions that undergird prostitution, such as the unequal valuing of women's bodies and the presumed right of sexual access to women's bodies, and to stimulate the generation of survivor-led movements for social change.

In order to further improve accessibility and relevance of services to prostituted women of color and poor women in prostitution, employees of social service agencies that work with this population should come from diverse racial, cultural, and class backgrounds, including bi- or multi-lingual services and translation services. Prostituted women, already told by pimps and the broader culture that they do not fit in with "square"

BRIDGING THE GAP

society, are unlikely to feel welcome or understood in organizations where they do not see themselves represented, no matter how well-intentioned the agency may be. This is also a strong argument in favor of survivor-run programs, which break down the barriers between those who have been in “the life” and are seeking assistance and those who are deemed to “know” about prostitution and service provision and considered qualified to “help.” Survivor-run agencies can provide services deeply informed by the lived experience of prostitution, and are likely to be perceived as less judgmental by prostituted women (Hotaling, Burris, & Bird, 2004; Rabinovitch, 2004).

Currently, the voices of those prostituted women who claim the mantle of professional “sex workers” dominate academic and popular discourse by women in prostitution, while women who are substantially different from these relatively privileged “sex workers” are largely excluded. These women are similarly excluded from discourses about prostitution that privilege “expert” knowledge, reinforcing the epistemological boundary between those who “know” and those who “experience” that has plagued many traditional feminist movements and hindered the development of strategies and theories that address the needs of the multiply marginalized (Lewis, 2013). As Lewis (2013) points out, “experience could be the ground of theory making” if the false distinction between “knowing” and “experiencing” could be dissolved and the knowledge of those who experience intersectional oppression and exploitation could become the foundation of theory and intervention (p. 873). When individual and systemic solutions to prostitution can emerge from the experiences of a diverse array of survivors, with priority given to the most marginalized and typically excluded voices, intersectional movements that pursue equity over individualism will have a chance to thrive.

Implications for clinical practice. While the mental health needs of prostituted women are varied, an understanding of internalized oppression and subordination together with a relational psychoanalytically informed psychological perspective has implications for clinical work with prostituted women that addresses the impacts of early misattunement, neglect, and abuse; later abuse and exploitation; and structural and internalized oppression. These experiences significantly influence prostituted women's patterns of relating, self-valuation, and sense of what is possible, all of which profoundly influence choices to engage in prostitution and options for exiting "the life," making them vital areas of focus in the psychotherapeutic process. In addition to being trauma-informed, mental health services for prostituted women should incorporate a relational psychodynamic understanding of dissociated self-states, the nuances and complexity of each woman's intersubjective field, and the challenges to clinical work that arise when the clinician inevitably finds herself embedded in the analysand's unique relational matrix.

Relational psychoanalytic theory's emphasis on the potential for developing new patterns of behavior and interaction points to the importance of supportive community in healing from the harmful effects of prostitution and exploring new ways of relating. As with social services, mental health services for prostituted women should be offered in settings that encourage community-building among the women served. Clinicians should also help their clients identify other people and communities that fortify their ongoing development and support their efforts at self-valuation. Like all other services for women with experiences of prostitution, mental health services must be made available in community settings where they can be easily and confidentially accessed by prostituted women, regardless of their degree of autonomy. This would require availability of drop-in

BRIDGING THE GAP

crisis and mental health services, to accommodate women whose schedules are unpredictable and whose lives may be chaotic.

As in clinical work with other chronically traumatized populations, early treatment with women who have a history of prostitution should focus on building a secure relationship, establishing safety, and increasing affect regulation before they can safely explore the complex realities of their lives, their relational fields, and their locations in various power structures (van der Kolk, 1989; Herman, 1992; Courtois, 2004). With this in mind, psychological services for prostituted women must be provided by clinicians who are trauma responsive, non-judgmental, aware of the relationships between childhood sexual abuse and prostitution and between prostitution and substance use, and who prioritize issues of trust, feelings of powerlessness, and low self-worth that may be barriers to building rapport or engaging effectively in therapy (Gorry, Roen, & Reilly, 2010). Ideally, mental health services would be provided, at least in part, by licensed clinicians who have themselves experienced prostitution and engaged in their own treatment to reflect on and integrate their prostitution histories (and other experiences of abuse, where applicable). Where this is not possible, clinical services should be augmented by peer support programs (in the form of support groups, mentoring relationships, or more informal drop-in assistance) that offer prostituted women emotional and practical support from other women with prostitution histories who have themselves engaged in critical reflection, psychotherapy, peer counseling training, or other activities that enhance their capacities to provide peer support. This type of peer counseling avoids some potential pitfalls of more formal therapeutic relationships, such as pathologizing and the reinforcement of traditional power hierarchies, which makes it a valuable complement to traditional psychotherapy.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Clinicians working with prostituted women must be particularly attentive to ways they may be pulled into a victim/victimizer complementarity, leading to enactments in which the woman feels retraumatized, disempowered, and disconnected. Relational psychoanalysis' two-person orientation calls attention not only to the client's role in these polarized interactions, but to the way the analyst's subjectivity inevitably interacts with the analysand's, necessitating attention on the part of the analyst to her or his own feelings toward and reactions to the analysand, and to the way they are grounded in the analyst's own internal organizing principles. This is particularly crucial when working with the highly stigmatized and often multiply traumatized population of women who have been prostituted (Anklesaria & Gentile, 2012), as extreme reactions are to be expected when working with women who have undergone extreme experiences. As Herman (2012) recounts, based on her own and other clinicians' experiences working with prostituted women in the Victims of Violence Program at Cambridge Hospital, even seasoned clinicians are prone to intense countertransference responses when working with women who have been used in prostitution, ranging from anxiety, disgust, and denial, to fascination, voyeurism, and even sexual excitement, which, if left unaddressed, can increase the client's experience of rejection, stigmatization, and objectification. Clinicians, for example, should be particularly cautious to avoid asking questions about prostituted women's experiences out of curiosity or fascination alone where no theoretically-grounded reasoning exists to probe for details. Such voyeuristic lines of questioning can recreate a prostituted woman's experience of being invaded, violated, and on display. Conversely, avoidance of subject matter that makes the clinician uncomfortable should also be noted and challenged where shying away means not reflecting with the client on aspects of her life that are painful, but

BRIDGING THE GAP

vital, to consider. This avoidant tendency can reproduce the role of the uncaring bystander who turns away from the painful realities of the client's experience. These potential pitfalls call for reflexivity on the part of the clinician to consider how the analyst's own organizing principles determine the questions she/he asks (or avoids), and the interventions she/he employs; how these choices may contribute to the analysand's experiences of marginalization and exploitation; and what role the analyst may be inhabiting in the client's own relational matrix. Consultation groups in which clinicians meet regularly to discuss cases and offer each other feedback are an invaluable way for clinicians to recognize and engage constructively with their countertransference toward these clients.

While attention to countertransference with this population is vital, relational psychoanalytic theory also holds that co-created enactments and impasses are inevitable, and that the experience of rupture and repair is a vital component of psychic change. This requires a willingness on the part of the analyst to accept responsibility for contributing to the doer/done-to polarity and to collaborate with the analysand to co-create new ways of communicating and understanding one another. In reflecting thoughtfully in the room about one's own role in painful impasses and enactments and engaging the client in a process of mutual recognition and repair, the clinician offers a new mode of relating in the analytic dyad that restores a sense of morality, justice, and trust—qualities that have likely been absent or violated in prostituted women's relationships with pimps, johns, police, and broader society. Effective use of the analytic third allows the client to explore the possibility of richer, more flexible ways of organizing internal experience and engaging in the intersubjective field. The psychic space of the third also allows for the integration of previously unintegrated and unsymbolized traumatic memories and dissociated self-states

BRIDGING THE GAP

associated with previous trauma, neglect, or misattunement as they arise in transference-countertransference interactions, where these unconscious communications can be explored, elaborated, and worked through. The increased flexibility afforded by collaborative engagement in the space of the third creates the potential for prostituted women to engage in new ways of knowing themselves and relating with others that are more deeply integrated and fulfilling, allowing for the exploration of alternatives to helplessness, self-criticism, internalized objectification, and exploitative relationships.

Brittany's developing awareness of the exploitative nature of her relationship with her landlord/employer offers an inroad for exploring patterns of relating that, while once adaptive, are now maladaptive and painful. The harmful impact of these patterns (and their protective origins) would become clear through attention to the emergence of these and other patterns in the transference-countertransference dynamic and Brittany's life outside therapy, and reparative interactions with the clinician and others could begin to offer new patterns of relating based on mutuality rather than exploitation. Brittany's early relationship with her teacher, Ms. A, might also serve as a valuable alternative model of relating, providing Brittany with a positive internal object representation that could allow her to access the part of herself that recognizes her inherent value and worth.

Intersectional analysis enriches a relational approach to clinical work with prostituted women, by highlighting the importance of exposing internalized oppression and stigma that arises at the intersections of various identities, and of addressing this internalized subordination in clinical practice. A consciousness-raising approach can be integrated into psychotherapy to support women in understanding the ways multiple, interlocking oppressions (as well as privileges) have impacted their sense of self, and

BRIDGING THE GAP

influenced their opportunities, expectations for themselves, and interactions with various systems (including the process of entry into prostitution, challenges faced in attempting to exit “the life,” and interactions with pimps and johns). This intersectional approach combines neatly with a relational psychodynamic approach that explores internalized subordination, intersubjective experiences, and self and object representations, incorporating exploration of both the macro- and micro-level influences on a prostituted woman’s intrapsychic experiences and interpersonal patterns. The emphasis in relational psychoanalysis on mutual influence and co-created meaning helps break down the power hierarchy embedded in the traditional analytic relationship, meshing well with intersectionality’s goal of self-definition and self-valuation, and offering the possibility to prostituted women of more egalitarian relationships with others that reject the oppressive stereotypes that deny subjectivity to women, people of color, and poor people. An integrated intersectional and relational psychodynamic approach to psychotherapy would enrich the therapy and create possibilities for emancipatory clinical practice that does more than simply attempt to “empower” through focus on individual autonomy, but rather emphasizes connectedness, real interactions with outside others and systems of power, and the ways those interactions shape the mind.

Self-valuation as resistance and the challenges of valuing selfhood. Self-definition has been proposed by Patricia Hill Collins (1986) as a method by which marginalized women, and Black women in particular, can resist internalized oppression and reject the stereotypes that dehumanize and control them. Self-valuation, she argues, is the process by which members of dominated groups can embrace and value those aspects of themselves that allow them to survive in harsh environments, despite being maligned by

BRIDGING THE GAP

dominant society. Prostituted women of color, for example, might choose to reject the stereotype of Black women as sexually degenerate and available to men, while embracing their own sexual agency. This drive for self-definition and self-valuation can be seen in efforts to claim the identity of “sex worker” as a powerful contrast to labels like “whore,” with their connotations of moral degeneracy, greed, drug addictions, and disease. Viewed in that light, the “sex worker” movement seems to hold great promise as a method for rejecting the pejorative stereotypes of prostituted women that stigmatize them and relegate them to pariah status, replacing them with complex human subjects endowed with agency, power, and the right to self-determination. Yet, as Collins points out, self-valuation is a useful strategy for resisting oppression only as long as it does not replace one set of controlling images with another. When prostitution is thought of only as an issue of the rights of “sex workers” to sexual autonomy and the right to perform sexual “work,” we miss the ways that the “sex work” movement emerged from a largely White, middle-class feminist understanding of prostitution, and so reflects the perspective of race- and class-privileged women who are able to make the choice to engage in prostitution from a larger range of options and often with fewer elements of coercion, while obscuring the violence that often characterizes prostitution for women of color and poor women. The role of intersectional racism, classism and heteropatriarchy in creating and sustaining prostitution is obfuscated, masking the way that some women, particularly racialized and poor women, are marked for sexual exploitation while ensuring other women are able to live lives of lesser violence. Only when we understand the ways that capitalist, White supremacist, patriarchal values are implicated in the process by which “sex work” is normalized as a “career choice” does it become clear that rejecting “whore” and embracing “sex worker”

BRIDGING THE GAP

simply trades one set of oppressive images for another by rejecting sexist moralizing while maintaining a self-valuation couched in the language of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy that ignores the reality of prostitution for less privileged women. While the reframing of prostitution as “sex work” may offer a way for some prostituted women to resist internalized oppression by claiming their own agency and empowerment, it remains a problematic method for multiply marginalized women. By failing to critically analyze the system of prostitution that relies on the existence of certain classes of women who can be exploited, the “sex work” method of self-valuation fails to address the oppression inherent in the commercial sex industry.

A further challenge to the idea of self-valuation arises when we consider not only an intersectional analysis, but a relational analysis of prostitution. As Benjamin (1988) points out, girls are largely denied subjectivity in the process of psychosocial development, and form a sense of selfhood within family and societal structures that frustrate girls’ efforts to become authors of their own desire. Without full subjectivity, can self-valuation occur in a way that truly challenges oppression, or will efforts at self-valuation inevitably be imbued with the patriarchal images that exist to control women and maintain White male hegemony? A relational psychoanalytic perspective can offer the psychological nuance that brings intersectional theory to life, providing a complementary theoretical framework and a valuable clinical sensibility to the conceptualization of prostitution and to clinical work with prostituted women. In Benjamin’s (1998) discussion of the oedipal situation, she describes how the male child’s repudiation of his own dependence and passivity leads to the father’s fantasy of the daughter’s passivity, in that the father defensively projects his own split-off passivity onto the daughter so that she becomes the embodiment of the

BRIDGING THE GAP

passive object, as well as the “container into whom the father discharges and expels unmanageable tension” (p. 32). Because the daughter’s position has involved “accepting the position of intolerable passivity (in order to be his desire, as she might earlier have tried to be her mother’s desire),” she becomes lodged in the passive side of the active-passive gender complementarity, striving always to contain males’ fear of re-engulfment and disavowal of passivity, aiming to satisfy the male desire for omnipotence. In the commercial sexual transaction, these polarized roles stand out all the more starkly as the male client owns his desire and sexual subjectivity, and asserts his ability to exert omnipotent control over a woman chosen precisely for her objectified role as passive receptacle. While conscious choice certainly contributes to the commercial sexual encounter, these deeply encoded and highly polarized gender roles are inevitably involved in patterns of interaction, choices of partners, and roles assumed within the context of those relationships. Other relational concepts offer similar challenges to the self-valuing endeavor, demonstrating how the parts of oneself that have been most rejected, abused, and neglected are cordoned off into dissociated self-states, largely inaccessible to the part of oneself that is typically thought of as “self.” An understanding of the unconscious workings of the mind complicates the notion of self-valuation that does not include a deep analysis of one’s unconscious, unquestioned, and gendered self.

Bringing together the idea of self-valuation with the principles of relational psychoanalysis offers the potential for more deeply informed self-valuation that resists not only the stigmatization and oppression of prostituted women by society, but the internalized subordination that impacts the ways prostituted women understand themselves and their interactions with the world. A process of psychoanalytically informed

BRIDGING THE GAP

self-valuation for prostituted women might include an understanding of the internalized subordination that casts women as passive objects who must prioritize the needs and satisfaction of others above their own, so that the experience of prostitution could be critically interrogated and understood in terms of the gendered power dynamics involved. Another relational psychoanalytic concept that might be incorporated into a relationally informed process of self-valuation is that of dissociated self-states. Davies and Frawley (1994) explain that unsymbolized traumatic experiences “lie encrusted in a primitive core of unspeakable terror and phenomenologically meaningless panic, intrusive ideation, and somatic sensation” (p. 45), challenging the notion that these aspects of self could be fully engaged in the process of self-valuation without thorough psychological exploration and integration. As Davies and Frawley (1994) point out in relation to survivors of childhood sexual abuse, relational psychoanalysis must aim to integrate “each patient’s multiple experiences of self as they exist in relationship to defensively fragmented aspects of her internal object world” (p. 45). In Brittany’s case, relational psychoanalysis could facilitate the integration of the part of Brittany that understood herself to be an autonomous woman making choices for herself, and the part of her that felt powerless, coerced, fearful, and angry about her abusive experiences and the ways in which they constrained her choices. A more integrated self would allow for efforts at self-valuation that more comprehensively resist internalized oppression as well as the structures of oppression that sustain prostitution as a whole.

Brittany, for example, might come to understand herself as a survivor of undeserved abuse, and embrace the aspects of her self that are strong, fierce, and determined to survive while relinquishing the idea that she is constrained to survival in an exploitative

BRIDGING THE GAP

occupation or relationship. At the same time, she could work with her therapist to understand and value those aspects of her self that are nurturing, loving, and capable of caring deeply and thoughtfully for herself and others without sacrificing herself, subordinating her needs to the demands of others, or feeling beholden to people who treat her poorly. Exploring and valuing the many facets of her identity, incorporating qualities that are typically gendered and thereby treated as mutually exclusive, could help Brittany restore the balance between independence and connectedness, rationality and empathic holding, that opens the door to fully realized subjectivity, mutual recognition, and the casting off of internalized subordination (Benjamin, 1988).

Brittany's pregnancy and the emergence of her new role as mother offer fertile ground for working through these questions of subjectivity and internalized oppression through an intersubjective and intersectional lens. Her choice to leave prostitution to ensure a better life for her unborn son demonstrates strength, autonomy, and a commitment to motherhood that could be cultivated in a balanced way to nurture pride in her role as a caring, protective mother while prioritizing and attending to her own needs, desires, and aspirations. By taking an intersubjective approach to motherhood that embraces the active development of maternal subjectivity and mutual recognition in the mother/infant dyad, Brittany could combat the problematic Madonna/whore dichotomy that impresses upon women the notion of selfless motherhood (devoid of sexual agency or subjectivity) as the only sanctioned alternative to supposed sexual degeneracy and social exclusion. In addition to challenging the good woman/bad woman binary, these types of self-valuation offer an alternative to the dichotomous roles of empowered sex worker and passive victim so often presented as the only options for women in prostitution.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Embracing the complexity of the psychic experience of prostitution by incorporating an understanding of the role of interlocking oppressions and unconscious aspects of the self in the “choice” of prostitution can help unseat the internalized subordination that has circumscribed many prostituted women’s lives, and provide them with a deeper understanding of themselves that opens up possibilities for greater intimacy, new modes of relating, and a fortified sense of themselves as valuable and free from the control of others.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As noted in the previous chapter, the applicability of Benjamin’s (1988, 1998) theory of internalized subordination and gendered psychosocial development assumes a family structure and dynamic that are normatively White, middle-class, and heterosexual. While Benjamin challenges the patriarchal bias of classical psychoanalytic theory, she leaves its raced, classed, and heteronormative assumptions largely unchallenged, which may limit the utility of her theory for clinical work with marginalized populations. An intersectional critique of Benjamin’s intersubjective theory offers fertile ground for future research to increase the reach of this theory and challenge its unquestioned assumptions. For example, an intersectional reading of Benjamin’s (1988, 1998) texts demonstrates that the gendered roles she challenges adhere to White, middle class norms of femininity and masculinity, raising the question of how her theory of psychosocial development might apply (or fail to apply) to families with a parent or parents of color, or poor families, for whom there are differently gendered expectations and stereotypes. In poor Black communities where men are incarcerated at disproportionately high rates, for instance, Black men might be missing from the family structure and Black women who are sole breadwinners as well as primary caregivers might be differently associated with concepts

BRIDGING THE GAP

of separateness and oneness than the White, middle class mothers upon whom Benjamin's analysis appears to be implicitly based. Furthermore, multigenerational family units might be more common in communities of color, immigrant, and poor communities, resulting in multiple early caregivers for children, which might contribute to greater multiplicity and flexibility of identification than in dyadic or triadic parent-child units. Future research and analysis of psychosocial development in non-White families and families in varying economic strata would enrich relational psychoanalysis and increase its capacity, while a greater understanding of the many ways children develop self and object representations in different family structures with differently gendered roles could offer alternatives to the problem of subordination and domination that Benjamin so rightly challenges.

Another rich area for future research is the bridging of the relational psychoanalytic and trauma literatures. While some relational theorists, such as Davies and Frawley (1994), have used a relational psychoanalytic lens to theorize trauma and its impact on development, as well as clinical implications for treatment, this field remains largely unelaborated. Ample opportunity exists for collaboration between empirical trauma researchers, neuropsychologists, and relational psychoanalytic theorists in order to enrich the empirical literature on trauma and ground relational psychoanalytic approaches to trauma in the rapidly expanding scientific literature on trauma and the brain.

Other directions for future research include relational psychoanalytic and intersectional analyses of men and boys engaged in prostitution, and of the experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming people in prostitution. These populations are significantly underrepresented in the literature on the commercial sex trade, and a deeper understanding of the experiences of those in prostitution with different gender identities

BRIDGING THE GAP

would enrich our understanding of the unique, gendered power dynamics present in the commercial sex industry and inform social service and psychotherapeutic interventions with these overlooked populations.

Conclusion

The frequency with which women face physical and sexual violence in prostitution and experience painful psychological sequelae to the exploitation they undergo suggests that the conversation about prostitution must shift away from a simplistic choice/coercion debate and toward the recognition that, regardless of means of entry into the sex trade or perceptions of agency, prostitution poses a real threat to the physical and mental health of prostituted women. Furthermore, a deep analysis of the psychological and structural forces that create and sustain prostitution is vital to a clear understanding of the kind of choices that are available to women in general, and prostituted women in particular. Women as a whole are objectified and denied subjectivity so that they are groomed for submissive roles relative to men, while women of color and poor women are hypersexualized in the media and presumed to be sexually available, creating a culture in which women, and especially racialized and poor women, are primed for prostitution. An understanding of dissociated self-states and the relational matrices that outline our intrapsychic and interpersonal lives illuminates the role of life experiences, and particularly experiences of abuse, neglect, and misattunement, in determining one's sense of what is possible, what constitutes intimacy, and how boundaries and recognition occur in relation to self and other, so that certain experiences increase the likelihood of later exploitation. Once women have been funneled into prostitution through the interaction of their relational schemas and interlocking oppressions, they are then sold the notion of

BRIDGING THE GAP

empowerment and agency by pimps and johns who benefit from this illusion, and by relatively privileged women (in prostitution or out of it) who benefit from the existence of a class of exploited women who serve to absorb male violence.

Complexity like this ought not to be distilled into a polarized debate that fosters animosity, rigidity, and simplistic analysis at the expense of the real and nuanced needs of prostituted women. Academics, activists, and clinicians must instead challenge polarization, examining critically the way that each side of the polarity informs the other. Strivings for agency, authorship, and subjectivity must be understood alongside the realities of structural oppression and psychological trauma. If we are truly to meet the needs of women in prostitution, we must restore the tension between the structural and the psychological, between the need for self-valuation and psychological integration, and between those who “know” and those who “experience.”

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