

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

SEX WORKER OR VICTIM OF PROSTITUTION? ADVOCACY COLLABORATIONS  
AMONG NONPROFITS THAT REPRESENT INDIVIDUALS IN THE SEX TRADE

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THERESA ANASTI

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*For my parents, Frank and Donna Anasti*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL SERVICE AND POLICY RESPONSES TO THE SEX TRADE	24
CHAPTER 3: METHODS .....	52
CHAPTER 4: THE STRATEGIC ACTION FIELD OF SEX WORK AND SEX TRAFFICKING IN CHICAGO .....	67
CHAPTER 5: ORGANIZATIONAL PROFESSIONALIZATION AND HUMAN SERVICE NONPROFIT COLLABORATION.....	114
CHAPTER 6: INHABITED INSTITUTIONS AND THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS IN SHIFTING ORGANIZATIONAL LOGICS.....	140
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .....	183
APPENDIX 1A .....	205
APPENDIX 1B.....	207
APPENDIX 1C.....	209
APPENDIX 1D .....	211
APPENDIX 2 .....	217
REFERENCES .....	220

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: ORGANIZATIONAL LOGICS AROUND SEX WORK.....	149
TABLE 2: RESPONDENT LOGICS AROUND SEX WORK.....	161
TABLE 3: HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS.....	217
TABLE 4: GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS.....	219
TABLE 5: END DEMAND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS.....	219

## ABSTRACT

The field of sex work and sex trafficking is a highly contentious one, and organizations that represent sex workers have different conceptions as to what solution best serves this population. In Chicago, as in many major cities across the US, there are several groups that pose what they believe are viable solutions to problems related to sex work. One group advocates for an “abolitionist” approach, meaning that they advocate for abolishing the sex trade, through service provision for victims of prostitution and increased criminalization and fines for purchasers of sexual services. In Chicago, this group is referred to as “End Demand,” a group of individuals and organizations that have formed a large advocacy coalition to lobby for changes in prostitution laws. As their approach has been institutionalized in law enforcement and service provision, I refer to them as the incumbent organization in this field.

Another group advocates for the complete decriminalization of sex work (for buyer and seller), and the acceptance of sex work as a type of labor. This group does not consider sex work a problem in and of itself, but rather suffering from problems stemming from illegality and stigma. While there are several organizations that acknowledge this decriminalization approach, the most prominent one in Chicago is the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP-Chicago), a small, volunteer and sex-worker run organization that provides peer support and small scale human services to sex workers. SWOP-Chicago is the challenger organization, seeking to provide an alternative to End Demand approaches to sex work. Both of these groups collaborate with human service nonprofits that work with sex workers in order to disseminate their preferred service approach with this population.

This dissertation examines the Chicago-based field of sex work and sex trafficking through the lens of these advocacy organizations that claim to represent sex workers, as well as

human service nonprofits that may provide services to this population. This dissertation seeks to answer three central questions. First, how are human service nonprofits, those organizations tasked with providing services to sex workers, situating themselves in this debate around sex work? Second, how is SWOP-Chicago, the challenger organization, working to gain allies in the human service nonprofit field in order to counter discourse put out by the incumbent? Third, how are human service nonprofits collaborating with advocacy groups (End Demand and SWOP-Chicago) to address the concerns that they feel are impacting sex workers?

Data for this fourteen-month project was gathered through approximately 500 hours of participant observation of SWOP-Chicago, as well as observations of events (conferences, panels, theater performances, fundraisers, etc.) that referenced issues of sex work and sex trafficking in Chicago. I also conducted a total of 53 interviews with players in this field: nine interviews with board members of SWOP-Chicago, four interviews with End Demand advocacy organizations, thirty-eight interviews with high level employees of human service nonprofits, and two interviews with employees at government organizations. In this analysis, I also included a document review of news and media articles that discuss issues of sex work and sex trafficking in a national context. I use the theoretical frameworks of Strategic Action Fields (SAFs) and institutional logics to situate my findings.

I found that although there are a few nonprofit organizations that continue to support the End Demand approach, many human service nonprofit respondents (as well as the government respondents) are beginning to question the predominance of the End Demand logic, for three major reasons. First, respondents are concerned that End Demand may increase, rather than decrease criminalization of their clients. Second, is the growing popularity of harm reduction logics to working with individuals that may be engaged in “risky” behaviors such as sex work

and drug use. Harm reduction, with its focus on behavior reduction rather than abstinence aligns more with decriminalization logics to sex work. Third, are the increased efforts among SWOP-Chicago, the “challengers” in this study, to promote their approach to sex work to human service nonprofits across Chicago—in the past several years they have provided workshops and trainings for a number of service nonprofits across Chicago, almost all of whom have responded positively to SWOP’s presence in their institutional field. However, although some organizations have been supportive of SWOP, very few organizations have been willing to publicly come out as supporters of the decriminalization of sex work, even if individual staff members may privately support decriminalization.

Broadly, this study adds to our knowledge of how advocacy organizations collaborate with human service nonprofits and what this actually means for the population of concern. More specifically, I contribute to our knowledge of understanding how human service nonprofits, many of whom do not serve specifically serve sex workers, situate themselves between these mutually exclusive logics of abolitionism and decriminalization of sex work. Social work, and by extension human service provision, has been historically associated with treating sex workers as victims, and trying to abolish the sex industry. This project demonstrates that there are social workers and human service providers that are taking the uphill climb in challenging this discourse with the assistance of SWOP-Chicago.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On a Saturday afternoon in September 2015, members of the Sex Workers Outreach Project-Chicago (SWOP-Chicago), current and former sex workers, and allies met for a day of “Sex Worker Solidarity Action”, a protest which consisted of a march that would take them through the Chicago North Side neighborhood of Lakeview. SWOP-Chicago is an advocacy organization consisting of current and former sex workers based in Chicago that is dedicated to supporting sex workers’ rights to live healthy and fulfilling lives, on and off the job (Sex Workers Outreach Project-Chicago, 2014)—they had been in charge of organizing the protest. The protest, which included an hour of sign making at a well-known LGBTQ organization in the neighborhood prior to the march, was held in response to the raid of Rentboy offices in New York City (Rentboy is an online space where male escorts advertise their services, as well as access resources and gain peer support)<sup>1</sup>, as well as general efforts by politicians, anti-trafficking organizations and law enforcement to remove online spaces where sex workers advertise. SWOP-Chicago, as a group that advocates for the decriminalization of sex work, denounces efforts to remove safe spaces where sex workers are able to advertise. The group of about twenty to twenty-five individuals gathered that day were there to assert that the raid of Rentboy, as well as other efforts to shut down online advertising spaces, were a direct assault on the labor rights and safety of sex workers.

A board member of SWOP-Chicago led the protest, providing attendees with the route of the march, and described what they were legally able to do, stating: “Legally, we are responsible

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information about the Rentboy raid, see news articles by Clifford (August 25, 2015) in the New York Times and Moyer (August 26, 2015) in the Washington Post.

for what you do during the march. You need to stay on the sidewalk, and not go out into the street. During the march, please don't post stickers. Afterwards, we are no longer responsible. So please post stickers wherever you want. [laughing] I didn't say that." Each protest attendee carried stickers that said "Hug a Ho" and "Sex Workers Rights are Human Rights" (which they handed out to people on the street, in lieu of posting them). The group of protestors, along with a reporter from the LGBTQ paper Windy City Times and a lawyer from the National Lawyer's Guild (a progressive bar association) marched through Lakeview, singing chants such as "When Rentboy is under attack, what do we do? Stand up fight back!" and "Escorts, hustlers, dommes: We're your neighbors friends and moms!" As the group paraded through Wrigleyville in the midst of a recently concluded Cubs game, the chants turned to "You know one of us, you know one of us!" to the consternation of several observers, some of whom commented the group was "disgusting" and "ugly". Others appeared to applaud the group, giving high fives in support. Regardless of some of the negative attacks, the group marched on, returning to their base in Lakeview and debriefing the event with humor and optimism.

I mention this anecdote as an entry point to discuss some of the attendees at the protest. Certainly there were current and former sex workers present, as they are the individuals who have the most to fear from these efforts to shut down adult online advertising, but also in attendance were employees of a few well-known human service nonprofits in Chicago. These individuals helped to advertise the protest, made signs for the protest, and were there in public and active support of sex workers' labor rights. While employees of human service nonprofits can certainly be involved in political advocacy, it is often the case that they eschew confrontational advocacy methods such as political protests in favor of less controversial actions such as educating and/or forming personal relationships with political officials (Mosley, 2012).

When they are involved in protests and demonstrations, we might expect that they would be involved on issues directly affecting their clients—but in Chicago, there are very few nonprofits that provide services primarily to individuals who identify as sex workers. Furthermore, service provision to sex workers has often focused on getting clients to exit the sex trade, and mainstream advocacy efforts tend to be focused on issues of sex trafficking, often conflating sex trafficking with survival or consensual sex work (Bernstein, 2010; Lutnick, 2016; Musto, 2016; Weitzer, 2007).

So what leads employees of human service nonprofits to collaborate with sex workers on this type of protest? Some might call this a risky form of protest as it involves some form of “outing,” either as a sex worker, or someone in support of sex worker rights (this is particularly the case as the group marched around an extremely crowded post-Cubs game Wrigleyville). Moreover, involvement in this protest in opposition to the closure of online advertising spaces appears to run counter to the assumption among a few anti-trafficking advocates and service providers that shutting down these spaces and increasing penalties on men who purchase sexual services is an important way to end sexual exploitation (Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, 2012; Demand Abolition, 2017b; Kristof, January 12, 2017). These assumptions characterize an approach to sex work that is referred to interchangeably as abolitionism, the Swedish model, or End Demand, and it refers to a group of actors that seek to eliminate prostitution and help women leave the sex trade. They do this through 1) provision of rehabilitative services for women who are involved in sex work and 2) increased criminalization for pimps and clients of sex workers. Organizations like SWOP-Chicago, that advocate for the decriminalization of sex work, argue against this way of conceptualizing the sex trade, noting that it will drive the sex trade further underground.

Overall, this dissertation will look at the extent to which human service nonprofits (HSNPs) in the city of Chicago collaborate with advocacy organizations for the purposes of policy advocacy, specifically organizations that advocate on behalf of individuals involved in the sex trade. Currently, there are two different advocacy groups in the City of Chicago advocating for this population. The first group, End Demand Illinois, may be termed an incumbent, a group that currently has frequent and consistent access to institutions of power, including government officials, law enforcement, and media. End Demand Illinois takes the “abolitionist” stance on sex work mentioned above—it is fundamentally against the existence of sex work and seeks to abolish it (Bernstein, 2010). I refer to them in this dissertation as an “incumbent critic” as they have been organizing against the predominant criminal-justice oriented approach to the sex trade, seeking to alter this dynamic by making a case against the criminalization of sex workers, while promoting increased criminalization for the buyer, and increased rehabilitative services for the sex worker.

The second group, or the “challenger,” puts forth a discourse that serves to challenge this status quo in regards to societal beliefs about sex work. This organization, SWOP-Chicago, who organized the aforementioned Rentboy protest, operates as a sex workers rights group, advocating for policies that would broadly decriminalize and destigmatize all forms of consensual adult sex work, including prostitution. This organization is made up of actors seeking to challenge abolitionist solutions to the current problem of sex work, including any attempts to treat sex workers as victims. Through its organizational activities, including advocacy, peer support, and small-scale service provision, this challenger organization promotes an outsider logic that runs contrary to normative solutions to the issue at the current moment.

At the Rentboy protest, there were members of the human service provider community in Chicago that “came out” as allies of sex workers, or perhaps sex workers themselves, regardless of the consequences that this might have for their work in service provision. What I found through this project is that as much of the mainstream discourse among human service providers privileges anti-trafficking or End Demand discourse, this was not true for many service providers in Chicago, many of whom have either come to embrace a decriminalization approach to sex work as demonstrated by SWOP-Chicago, or have questioned the predominance of increased criminalization as promoted by End Demand. However, this acceptance of decriminalization has not yet transferred to significant public policy support. This dissertation explains why.

### **Argument**

This dissertation examines the field of sex work and sex trafficking in Chicago, focusing specifically on advocacy organizations that claim to represent sex workers,<sup>2</sup> and human service providers that may provide human services to this population.<sup>3</sup> In it, I pursue a dual goal: I seek to explain what motivates human service nonprofits (who may not serve sex workers explicitly) to collaborate with advocacy organizations on issues affecting sex workers, and also highlight the role of SWOP-Chicago in fostering an environment that encourages collaboration with service providers, even when the larger environment privileges End Demand approaches to sex work. Despite efforts to decriminalize the seller of sexual services in Chicago, individuals that are arrested for prostitution continue to be served by the criminal justice system, and are referred to prostitution-diversion programs and other human services to help them exit the sex trade.

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<sup>2</sup> Although some advocacy organizations and service providers in this project use the term “prostituted women” or “victims of prostitution”, I personally concur that sex work may be a form of labor, and thus use the term sex workers, or individual in the sex trade interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> While I acknowledge that law enforcement are often on the front lines of this debate, I do not involve them heavily in this work. For more information on the collaboration between law enforcement and social services, see Musto (2016) and Dewey and St. Germain (2016).

While this may be considered an improvement over the harsh criminalization that sex workers were previously subject to (until 2013, prostitution could be upgraded to a felony in Illinois), sex worker rights activists say that this process of “benevolent” criminalization continues to stigmatize sex workers, and mandated social service provision often sets arrested individuals up for failure.

These two competing approaches to sex work—with one approach, End Demand, clearly in a position of dominance—raises three central questions that this dissertation addresses. First, how are human service nonprofits, those organizations tasked with providing services to sex workers, situating themselves in this debate around sex work? Second, how is the challenger organization (SWOP-Chicago) working to gain allies in the human service nonprofit field in order to counter discourse put out by the incumbent? Third, how are human service nonprofits collaborating with advocacy groups (End Demand and SWOP-Chicago) to address the concerns that they feel are impacting sex workers? To answer these questions, I draw on interviews with participants in SWOP-Chicago and high-level staff of human service nonprofits, as well as participant observation of events relating to sex work and sex trafficking in the Chicagoland area to address how organizations are working together (or competing against each other) to provide services to and advocate on behalf of individuals involved in the sex trade. What I found was striking: despite SWOP-Chicago’s relative lack of resources and more controversial positioning in regards to sex work, there has been an increasing number of human service providers wanting to work with them to promote the discourse of the decriminalization of sex work—this is even true for a few organizations that have signed on to support End Demand Illinois.

While there are plenty of human service nonprofits that continue to support End Demand, I found more respondents questioning the implicit acceptance of this policy—largely due to the

proposed increase in criminalization for clients of sex workers that comes with End Demand.

Along with these concerns, I argue that there are two primary reasons for this increase in support for decriminalization, and critique of End Demand policies: first is the growing popularity of harm reduction approaches to working with individuals that may be engaged in “risky” behaviors such as sex work and drug use, and second, is the increased efforts among SWOP-Chicago to promote their approach to sex work to human service nonprofits across Chicago—in the past several years they have provided workshops and trainings for a number of service nonprofits across Chicago, almost all of whom have responded positively to SWOP’s presence in their institutional field. However, I also conclude that this has not been a panacea for organizations working on sex worker rights: despite the strides that human services nonprofits have made towards an acceptance of decreased criminalization for sex work, very few organizations have been willing to publicly come out as supporters of the decriminalization of sex work, even if individual staff members may support decriminalization. In the protest mentioned in the introduction, human service staff came out to support SWOP as individuals, not as representatives of organizations. Indeed, some of these individuals have sought to incrementally shape their organization’s support for decriminalization by collaborating with SWOP-Chicago on service provision and advocacy—even if this may not be sanctioned by the entire organization.

When HSNPs collaborate for policy advocacy purposes they can positively affect the client population they are in contact with, reallocate time and resources spent on policy advocacy, promote public awareness of important social issues, endorse policies in larger numbers, and network with other public and private organizations. When advocacy organizations collaborate with human service nonprofits, they gain allies who may have different types of access to political actors, and an increased ability to reach organizations that are providing services to their

population on the ground level. For organizations advocating for an “unpopular” position, such as the decriminalization of sex work, these human service allies may be essential for helping them to get a seat at the policy table.

### **Description of End Demand and SWOP-Chicago**

To better understand this field, it is important to flesh out the specific roles of the major players that are situated within this field. End Demand Illinois is a campaign that “is shifting law enforcement’s attention to sex traffickers and people who buy sex, while proposing a network of support for survivors of the sex trade” (End Demand Illinois, 2011). The main organization driving this campaign is the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE), an advocacy organization that seeks to end sexual exploitation and trafficking in the Chicago area. In order to address the issue of sex trafficking, CAASE and other members of End Demand Illinois engage in prevention, policy and advocacy, community engagement, and legal services for individuals that have been victims of sexual exploitation. In the city of Chicago, members of End Demand Illinois advise political officials and community stakeholders, and are frequently invited to conferences, panels, and policy discussions when the issue of sex work or sex trafficking is discussed. By framing the issue of sex trafficking as one that is dependent on the existence of the sex industry, representatives of this group claim that ending sex trafficking requires eliminating the demand side of the sex industry (i.e., the clients). End Demand has been extremely successful in mobilizing funders, the general public, and government officials to their cause – successfully using their lobbying skills in order to pass five laws relating to sex work and sex trafficking in five years:

1. P.A. 96-1464 “Illinois Safe Children’s Act”, which provides minors under the age of 18 immunity from prosecution of prostitution (2010)
2. P.A. 97-0267 “Illinois Justice for Victims of Sex Trafficking Crimes Act”, which allows victims of sex trafficking to remove their prostitution convictions (2011)



3. P.A. 98-0538 “Elimination of Felony Prostitution”, which turned all prostitution convictions into Class-A misdemeanors (previously, prostitution convictions turned into a felony after the first arrest for prostitution), and allows individuals charged with prostitution to be admitted to the mental health court. (2013)
4. P.A. 98-1013 “Funding Specialized Services for Survivors of Human Trafficking”, which obtained new funding streams from fines of pimps, traffickers, and people who purchase sexual services, funneling this money into specialized services for trafficked persons. (2014)
5. P.A. 099-0190 “A Defense for Survivors of Human Trafficking” which allows an affirmative defense (where the defendant can use proof of trafficking as a justification for their participation in prostitution) for those individuals charged with prostitution. (2015) (End Demand Illinois, 2015)

These significant legal victories illustrate that End Demand Illinois have proven themselves formidable at lobbying on the issue of sex trafficking in Chicago. In addition to successfully lobbying for these laws, they provide resources for attorneys, and are advocating for services for survivors, seeking to create a statewide system of supportive services for survivors of prostitution and trafficking (End Demand Illinois, 2015).

SWOP-Chicago operates within a smaller network of activist organizations, and tries to counter one of the core narratives of the End Demand Campaign: abolishing the sex trade through increased criminalization of individuals who purchase sexual services will decrease in sex trafficking. The organization operates with an all-volunteer staff, no government funding, and limited foundation funding. Until recently, they had no stable physical location, meeting in spaces donated by non-profits or in members’ living rooms; as of March 2016, they have started to rent out a co-working space. SWOP-Chicago identifies itself as a “grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of current and former sex workers in the Chicago area, on and off of the job” (Sex Workers Outreach Project-Chicago, 2014). Their mission involves “supporting the rights of sex workers and their communities and focusing on ending violence and stigma through education, advocacy and peer support” (Sex Workers Outreach Project-Chicago,

2014). Instead of framing the problem of sex trafficking as one that is caused by the sex industry, they point to the stigmatization and criminalization of individuals in the sex trade, including the criminalization of clients, as contributing to the proliferation of sex trafficking. While SWOP-Chicago has become more visible in a larger societal context, their views continue to be marginalized by political officials and other elite stakeholders in and surrounding the city of Chicago. For so-called “deviant” social movements such as the sex workers rights movement, it is crucial to their success that they obtain the support of credible organizations that do not focus specifically on their population of interest, or else they run the risk of being perceived as an unorganized group of malcontents (Schur, 1980; Weitzer, 1991). Recently, SWOP has begun a process of alliance building and collaborations with human service nonprofits, in order to counteract this perception.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Interorganizational Collaboration of Human Service Nonprofit Organizations***

Human service nonprofits (HSNPs) have been known to collaborate both within and across sectors for a variety of reasons relating to service provision, often in the hopes of consolidating time and resources spent on their important service provision tasks (Austin, 2000; Selden, Sowa, & Sandfort, 2006; Takahashi & Smutny, 2001). Yet also for HSNPs, interorganizational collaboration with advocacy organizations may help connect their service provision efforts with a broader policy change mission. HSNPs and advocacy organizations can collaborate in a variety of ways: they can pool material and human resources, transfer organizational information and expertise, join together in protests and demonstrations, and engage in mutually agreed upon policy and legislative efforts.

Three primary theoretical frameworks have typically been used to explain the processes behind interorganizational collaboration for nonprofit organizations: resource dependency theory,

transaction cost theory, and neo-institutional theory (Foster & Meinhard, 2002; Guo & Acar, 2005). These theories, briefly explained below, are often utilized to explain collaboration for purposes of service provision, and may be constructive in situating collaboration for the purposes of advocacy. While I find resource dependency and transaction costs are insufficient for explaining the collaborations that are on display throughout this dissertation, neo-institutional theory, with its focus on cultural rules, norms, and beliefs, is a good fit with these processes. Neo-institutional theory, of course, does not come without its flaws, which other scholars have addressed. Thus, I situate this research within extensions (some would say improvements) upon neo-institutional theory: specifically, strategic action fields, institutional logics, and inhabited institutions.

In brief, resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) views organizations as embedded in particular networks and environments, subject to dependence on their external environment for resources (financial, human, knowledge, etc.). For instance, advocacy organizations and HSNPs may collaborate on legislative campaigns that would provide specialized funding for human services for a particular population of interest. Alternatively, as noted in the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter, nonprofit organizations can collaborate with advocacy organizations in ways that have nothing to do with increasing resources, and may in fact threaten their ability to gain additional support or funding—particularly if they are advocating for a politically unpopular position.

Transaction cost theory (Williamson, 1975) claims that one reason HSNPs may engage in collaborative activities is for the purpose of reducing transaction costs, costs incurred through the exchange of goods and services. If an HSNP is indeed active in policy advocacy, then it may be useful for these organizations to collaborate for advocacy purposes: the human and material

resource sharing that often occurs through collaboration will maximize financial benefits, thus reducing transaction costs incurred through engagement in advocacy (Austin, 2000; Foster & Meinhard, 2002). Of course, this logic can be reversed. If a collaboration is perceived as not worth the effort, organizational staff may choose to forgo the possible infighting and restrictions that sometimes occur with collaborative efforts, and choose to undertake these tasks themselves.

When considering these two theories to explain nonprofit collaborations, it is crucial to note that both explain collaborations as something organizations engage in primarily for self-interested motives. Yet, it is also the case that HSNPs may be engaging in advocacy collaborations for reasons other than self-interest, or even reasons may directly oppose self-interest. Neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) views organizations as dependent upon the acceptance of and legitimation by actors in their external environment (Scott, 2001; Scott & Davis, 2007). Over time, organizational actors begin to incorporate practices and procedures that have been accepted and legitimized by elite institutional actors, which provides survival benefits to the organization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Neo-institutional theory suggests that organizations seek to acquire sociopolitical or cultural legitimacy through conformity to institutionalized norms in their environment (Oliver, 1991). Yet, as scholars have demonstrated, there are many different types of legitimacy, as well as different sources of legitimacy that are of interest to organizations. While a discussion of the full scope of types of legitimacy goes beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to reflect upon the different types of legitimacy that may inform different organizational behaviors.

For instance, if an HSNP collaborates with an advocacy organization that has a track record of legislative and economic success, positive visibility in the public sphere and prestige

media (such as the New York Times and the Washington Post), as well as support from institutional elites and peers (government officials, other service organizations, general public, religious institutions), the socio-political legitimacy conferred may benefit the collaborating HSNP. Through association with a publicly recognized and socio-politically legitimate advocacy organization, HSNPs are unlikely to alienate groups that provide resources and endorsements (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992), and may appear more trustworthy to the general public (Suchman, 1995). Yet, it is also the case that collaboration with a more politically radical organization may result in increased legitimacy among more radically political organizations and individuals and more positive representation within grassroots or activist publications (such as *In These Times*, *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, or *Jacobin*) due to engagement in more activist and protest-oriented actions (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). Depending upon the organizational mission, logics, and culture, pursuit of either or both types of legitimacy is possible.

Of course, neo-institutional theory does not come without critiques—specifically, that it is inherently static, that it reduces organizational actors to passive pawns in their institutional environment, and that it has an over-socialized account of individual human actors within institutions and organizations. Below I address some of the extensions that have been made to institutional theory to better account for these concerns.

### ***Advocacy Organizations Within Strategic Action Fields***

In this dissertation, I discuss advocacy organizations working in the field of sex work and sex trafficking as strategic actors that are working to shape the field. Advocacy organizations “make public interest claims either promoting or resisting social change that, if implemented, would conflict with the social, cultural, political, or economic interests or values of other constituencies and groups” (Andrews & Edwards, 2004, p. 481). These changes are rarely able to

be implemented without support from strategic actors in their field who will serve as allies; as actors within the field, they must not only gain support from crucial allies, but they must also form collaborative partnerships with these allies to more effectively promote their agenda (Battilana et al., 2009; Fligstein, 1997, 2001; Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002). The likelihood of success is largely dependent on their ability to leverage available resources in order to cultivate legitimacy, which is what makes their engagement in collaborative activities with human service providers so important (Garud, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007). Certainly, these organizations are embedded in fields with a multiplicity of interests, which may make the pursuit of legitimacy more difficult (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Garud et al., 2007).

Advocacy organizations and human service nonprofits make up a strategic action field, a “meso-level social order where actors (who can be individuals or collective) interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field’s rules” (Fligstein and McAdam, 2011, p. 2). I will discuss this concept in more detail in Chapter 4, but here I use it to structure the two sides of responses to the sex trade that I am analyzing within this dissertation: organizations that advocate for the abolition of the sex trade, and organizations that advocacy for the decriminalization of the sex trade. Fligstein and McAdam note that there are discrete incumbents and challengers that constitute the makeup of strategic action fields, which I aim to clearly identify in this project.

Incumbent organizations seek to maintain and reproduce their hold on the status quo by framing their solutions as bipartisan and indisputable to a host of institutions and organizations, and possibly marginalizing the challenger (or opposing organization)’s proposed policy solutions. In this dissertation, the incumbent, a group of organizations called End Demand Illinois,

reiterates societal archetypes about individuals that are involved in the sex trade, claiming that they are victims of exploitation by third-party managers as well as purchasers of sexual services (Weitzer, 2007), but also challenges current discourse that sex trade-involved individuals should be criminalized (which is still how the majority of US states and localities deal with individuals involved in the sex trade). Thus I refer to them as an incumbent-critic, a group of organizations that criticize certain parts of the status quo (i.e., criminalization of sex workers), while reproducing and lauding other parts (i.e., criminalization of clients of sex workers, using law enforcement to rescue sex workers). Their reproduction of predominant discourse maintains their “systemic power”, or *power over*, which involves mobilizing current cultural biases for one’s solution to the problem (Hensmans, 2003, p. 361; Lukes, 1974). These incumbent organizations often have more access to work within institutions using insider tactics such as lobbying, meeting with legislators, and policy reports. Through these unobtrusive mobilizing tactics, they frame interest in their work to make them believe that their ideology is credible, desirable, and irrefutable (Hensmans, 2003; Katzenstein, 1998; Martin, 2005; Suchman, 1995) with a greater focus on these formal policy tactics as opposed to using protests, direct action, or other outsider tactics (although outsider tactics are not off the table) In this dissertation, I look at the role of the End Demand Illinois, and their efforts to gain supporters among HSNPs, examining their role as an incumbent-critic.

Challenger organizations (SWOP-Chicago, in this project) attempt to refute the status quo discourse on a given topic (Gamson, 1975). Challengers often seek to engage in “performative power” or *power with* rather than power over, relying on their individual strategic agency to create new organizational forms, discourses, and processes of legitimation (Arendt, 1998; Emerson, 1962; Hensmans, 2003, p. 361). The creation of challenger organizations have resulted

in new organizational forms such as anti-hierarchical rape crisis centers (Fried, 1994; Martin, 2005, 2009), new markets for products such as “slow food,” (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003; Weber, Heinze, & DeSoucey, 2008), and have altered the discourse between the rich and the poor (Campbell, Cornish, Gibbs, & Scott, 2010). Challenger organizations may be more likely to rely on outsider tactics to accomplish these tasks, as they are constructing new possibilities of solving a social problem and may not have access to mainstream institutions that would provide access to insider forms of political mobilization. Yet, it is often the case that these challenger organizations need to interact and gather support from mainstream institutions and organizations, like some human service nonprofits, in order to survive and succeed as an activist organization—by fostering ties with organizations that may be central to the strategic action field, they are better poised to enact institutional change (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 85).

### ***Competing Institutional Logics of HSNPs: Logics of Care among Human Service Nonprofits***

The institutional logics perspective helps scholars interested in questions of how individuals and organizations make sense of their role within an inter-institutional field: this includes organizational structure, cultural frames, as well as individual agency (Skelcher & Smith, 2014, p. 436; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). Institutional logics constitute a system of beliefs that provide a structure for organizational action (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Institutional logics are “supra-organizational and abstract, but become observable in the concrete social relations of actors who utilize, manipulate and reinterpret them” (Skelcher & Smith, 2014, p. 437). The presence of multiple institutional logics results in an institutionally complex field that may result in some conflict, but also provides the basis for possibilities to combine logics to create new and innovative solutions to particular problems.



In the United States, there are very few organizations that provide services directly to individuals in the sex trade, the target population of the advocacy organizations looked at in this study.<sup>4</sup> Thus, most human service nonprofits do not hold institutional service logics that are explicitly focused on this population. However, they do operate under logics that support or oppose logics around harm reduction vs. abstinence-oriented services generally. This is particularly true for organizations that work in the areas of substance abuse (Ball, 2007; Burke & Clapp, 1997; Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2002), STI and HIV prevention and/or reduction (Shernoff, 2006) homeless services (Allen, 2003; Tsemberis, Gulcur, & Nakae, 2004), domestic violence services (Koyama, 2006), and services for the poor (Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2014; Reingold & Liu, 2009). Organizations in these fields are also likely to provide services to individuals working in the sex trade, due to the overlap between these populations and engagement in the sex trade. Thus, it will be useful to explore how adherence to these different logics is associated with different approaches to advocacy collaboration.

Harm reduction is an institutional logic that has increased in popularity among HSNPs and advocacy organizations in the United States due to its success in decreasing HIV and other STI rates (Collins et al., 2012; Pauly, 2008; Riley & O'Hare, 2000; Wodak & Cooney, 2005). Harm reduction emerged as a grassroots movement in the 1980s to reduce the spread of HIV and hepatitis infections, and is now seen as a legitimate service logic, moving to replace the old abstinence-oriented logics (sometimes referred to as “treatment first”) which dictates that in order to receive services, the client had to be abstinent from risky behaviors (Henwood, Padgett, & Tiderington, 2014). Examples of harm reduction services include the provision of clean

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<sup>4</sup> Although Oselin and Weitzer (2013) provide a useful framework with which to view the continuum of services provided by prostitute-serving organizations (PSOs), for most HSNPs that may work with individuals in the sex trade, this population is not necessarily their target clientele. In Chicago, only three organizations work specifically with this population.

needles and condoms to inhibit HIV/STIs and “Housing First” programs that do not mandate sobriety as a condition to receive housing. Instead, the primary principle of harm reduction is the focus on the reduction of harm of risky health behaviors, rather than the elimination of, or abstinence from these behaviors. Service provision is not contingent upon abstinence from drugs and alcohol or “risky” sexual behavior. Harm reduction asserts that for some individuals, prohibiting risky behaviors may be even more damaging to the individual and their community than providing individuals with choices that reduce the risks stemming from these behaviors. Abstinence, in this sense, may be an unattainable goal for many clients (McKeganey, Morris, Neale, & Robertson, 2004).

In contrast to harm reduction methods, HSNPs that adhere to an abstinence service ideology believe that people, and by extension society, are best served when risky behaviors are completely eliminated. HSNPs that exclusively refer their clients to 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are an example of abstinence only programs.<sup>5</sup> Other examples include homeless service organizations that mandate sobriety in exchange for housing, sex education programs that promote abstaining from sex until marriage, and residential treatment programs that prohibit the use of drugs and alcohol while undergoing treatment.

Originally a practice geared toward reducing the harms associated with illicit substance use, harm reduction was mostly connected to services for sex workers if they were simultaneously intravenous drug users (Cusick, 2006; Rogers & Ruefli, 2004). Yet recently the domain of harm reduction has expanded, accompanying sex work that is unrelated to drug use

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that harm reduction organizations never send their clients to AA or NA; it is rather that harm reduction-oriented organizations typically provide other services outside of abstinence only programs.

(Cusick, 2006; Rekart, 2005; Shannon et al., 2009), making it a useful logic to examine when studying advocacy collaborations relating to issues of sex work. Organizations that use harm reduction logics are often associated with a more progressive or radical mission than those that abide by abstinence only treatment (Godfrey, 2014; Mattson, 2000), and may thus be more likely to collaborate with organizations seeking to challenge the status quo. In fact, sex work advocacy organizations have proposed working with harm reduction service organizations in order to help them achieve advocacy and service goals for the sex worker population (Ray, 2010). Thus, organizations that utilize harm reduction logics may be more likely to collaborate with an organization that advocates for harm reduction service approaches to sex work.

In contrast, organizations that abide by abstinence logics are more likely to advocate for complete elimination of the sex industry, and would likely prohibit client involvement in sex work while receiving services (Sloan & Wahab, 2000). Like substance use, sex work is considered a risky health practice (Cusick, 2006) and service-providing organizations that believe in the eradication of substance use may be more likely to collaborate with an organization that believes in the eradication of sex work, as these are both behaviors which they may deem immoral and/or harmful to the individual and society. Although these abstinence oriented service organizations are losing popularity to harm reduction approaches, they still fall in line with what is the primary method of dealing with risky health-related behaviors in the United States: that is, eradication and criminalization of the risky behaviors (Collins et al., 2012). However, it should also be that just because an organization holds a particular logic, it does not mean that they may act in accordance with that logic. Even if an organization claims to abide by either harm reduction or abstinence-oriented logics, its philosophy and street level service practices may exhibit differences at the ground level. Namely, abstinence organizations may

overlook illicit substance use among a client that has otherwise shown considerable improvement, and/or harm reduction organizations may force out a client that continues to engage in risky behavior: while both of these factors go against the philosophy of the organization, the divergence between policy and practice I have found to be important in determining engagement with advocacy organizations.

### ***Advocacy On Behalf of Sex Workers: Competing Institutional Logics on Concerns Specific to Sex Workers***

There has been recent scholarly interest to better understand the efforts of organizations to represent “intersectionally” marginalized groups, or populations that are considered marginalized within marginalized populations (Crenshaw, 1993; Strolovitch, 2007). People in the sex trade are often intersectionally disadvantaged, and their ranks include a range of individuals who may be disadvantaged based on categories of race, gender, sexuality, and class (Majic, 2014a). In this project, I refer to an individual who sells sexual services as a “sex worker,” or a “person in the sex trade” interchangeably. These terms refer to a broad range of occupations, including, but not limited to, prostitutes, exotic dancers, nude models, pornographic actors and actresses, and dominatrices.<sup>6</sup> Although there is a vast history of sex worker organizing and self-advocacy as I will discuss further in Chapter 2 (Bernstein, 2007, 2010; Chapkis, 1998; Jackson, 2013; Jenness, 1993; Majic, 2014b; Mathieu, 2003; Nagle, 1997; Pheterson, 1989; Weitzer, 1991), the semi-illegality<sup>7</sup> of the profession and its prevalence in the underground

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<sup>6</sup> To avoid confusion, I also include in this broad definition individuals that may not explicitly identify as “sex workers”, yet also exchange sexual services for material benefits. For instance, someone engaging in survival sex, or sexual services for receipt of housing may choose to distance themselves from this term. I wish to respect the wishes of individuals that do not identify with this term, yet for ease of description will refer to them as such.

<sup>7</sup> Prostitution is criminalized for both the buyer and seller of sex in the United States in 49 states, as well as in the District of Columbia. The one exception is Nevada, where brothel prostitution is legalized in select rural counties.

economy often precludes some sex workers, particularly those that are associated with criminality, from seeking social, legal, or economic services (Benoit, Jansson, Millar, & Phillips, 2005).

Devotees of the abolitionist approach believe that no person can voluntarily enter the sex trade, but are instead victims of forced coercion. In this view, sex work is harmful to all women involved, and is a direct result of patriarchal oppression and exploitation of women.<sup>8</sup> Abolitionists seek to abolish the sex trade, and have been proposing solutions to “end demand” of sex work, by increasing the criminalization of buyers of sexual services, and shutting down spaces (both virtual and physical) where sex workers advertise. Efforts to “end demand” and to abolish sex work can be seen as more aligned with the logic of abstinence, and thus a logic predicated upon efforts to end demand would be the proper partner to abstinence oriented service logics.

Sex workers rights proponents reject efforts of abolitionist organizations and scholars to abolish sex work, and instead claim that sex work is a form of labor that individuals may enter into by choice or in order to survive—while they acknowledge that many individuals may be coerced, they claim that this is not the only, or even the primary way in which individuals enter the sex trade. They do not reject any form of sex work, but instead look for ways to make it safer: this could be advocating for online spaces in which to advertise (a space which they claim is safer than working on the street), providing condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP),<sup>9</sup> and other STI reducing measures, providing counseling to other sex workers, or simply holding peer-

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<sup>8</sup> For these organizations, prostitution is typically thought of as something that affects almost exclusively women.

<sup>9</sup> Pre-exposure prophylaxis refers to the use of drugs that attack the HIV virus in order to prevent HIV-negative individuals from becoming infected. Currently there is one medication, Truvada, that health organizations recommend for this purpose.

run events to reduce the social isolation that some sex workers may encounter as a result of their stigmatized profession. These harm-reducing activities align their logic for decriminalization with the harm reduction service logic. In this dissertation, SWOP-Chicago, the organization mentioned in the anecdote at the beginning of the chapter, would exemplify this harm reduction and decriminalization approach.

### **Chapter Outline**

This dissertation proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, “Historical Service and Policy Responses to the Sex Trade” I discuss the historical and contemporary social work and public policy approaches to addressing the sex trade, tracing it from its roots in the Charity Organization Societies in the late 1800s, to the present day. In Chapter 3, I provide a detailed discussion of my qualitative methodology and analysis process. In Chapter 4, “The Strategic Action Field of Sex Work and Sex Trafficking in Chicago,” I discuss organizations working on issues of sex work and sex trafficking as a Strategic Action Field, where organizations interact with each other with a shared knowledge of the purposes and relationships of their field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). I discuss End Demand and SWOP-Chicago as incumbents and challengers, respectively, while also discussing the role of human service nonprofits as “neutral bystanders” in the field. In Chapter 5, “Organizational Professionalization And Human Service Nonprofit Collaboration,” I provide an in-depth case study on SWOP-Chicago, and their efforts at organizational professionalization to insert themselves into the nonprofit human service field: I discuss the pros and cons of professionalization for a radical organization like SWOP-Chicago, and how this may reconfigure the way radical politics is conducted. Chapter 6, “Inhabited Institutions and the Role of Individuals in Shifting Organizational Logics” focuses on how individuals within human service nonprofits contend with multiple competing organizational logics when collaborating with advocacy organizations. I discuss in this chapter how human

service nonprofit organizations have responded to the institutional complexity of policies surrounding sex work, as well as how micro-interactions on the individual level created and sustained organizational collaboration. I conclude in Chapter 7, returning to questions about what it means for organizations to collaborate for purposes of policy advocacy, particular on a topic that is as fraught with controversy as sex work and sex trafficking. In this section, I also provide suggestions for future research on sex work, human service and advocacy nonprofits, and small grassroots organizations, and conclude with a discussion on the state of the field.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL SERVICE AND POLICY RESPONSES TO THE SEX TRADE

### **Policy Responses to Prostitution 1880-1914**

To better understand the political and historical climate that human service, advocacy and social movement organizations have had to contend with regarding sex work, it is important to detail the history of policy and social work responses to prostitution specifically, and the constraints under which organizations and social workers have been working under while providing services. In the US, the history of the social work profession generally begins with the creation of Charity Organization Societies (COS), organizations that first emerged in England, migrating to the US in the 1870s. COS's consisted of groups of individuals (mostly middle and upper class women) who sought to systematically provide charity to the poor and indigent; yet embedded in COS beliefs is the idea that the poor were responsible for their circumstances, and that the assistance and voluntarism of middle class reformers were necessary to help the poor assimilate into middle class status (Boyer, 1978; Wenocur & Reisch, 1989). Scholars have noted that COS workers' judgment of the poor was commonly rooted in moralism and classism, as they believed that their own views and behaviors were superior to those whom they helped, denigrating those who did not fall in line with their beliefs (Leiby, 1978).

Prostitution in particular was considered by these organizations to be a highly pernicious vice. These workers were troubled by any indication of female sexuality and immorality generally, and prostitution was the worst of these offenses (Wahab, 2002). Members of COSs persisted in attacking the current European model of prostitution (a legalized enterprise which consisted of regulated brothels and regular medical inspection of prostitutes), trying to prevent this model from emerging in the US (Jabour, 2013). These groups feared that the practice of this legalized and regulated model in the United States would result in sanctioning commercialized



sex, increased corruption in law enforcement, and infringements against women's constitutional liberties (Jabour, 2013, p. 143). A quote from the *Official Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections*<sup>10</sup> illustrates just how negatively these charitable groups viewed prostitution:

“We have seen **prostitution** claiming its victims by the thousands, the modern Minotaur, devouring our virgins, being none other than the Insufficient Wage, just as we have seen thousands of other girls enduring fiercest temptation, in the face of weariness and a joyless life, growing old before their time and giving up the hope that every good woman has of a home of love with a babe at her breast” (McKelway, 1913, p. 18)

Prostitutes were considered victims incapable of making reasonable decisions, as evidenced in the above quote: prostitution was a “modern Minotaur” that was “devouring our virgins.” As COS workers broadly considered poverty a moral failing, prostitution specifically was the result of women being unable to think logically, thus “making themselves susceptible to sexual advances” (Wahab, 2002, p. 46). COS workers took the idea of women's chastity with the utmost gravity, believing that any sexual relationship outside of marriage was the result of men's dominance over and exploitation of vulnerable and weak-willed women. Their mistrust of female sexuality made them natural allies with religious evangelical reformers, individuals who believed that prostitution was the direct result of male aggression. COS workers wanted to abolish prostitution, and along with evangelical reformers, they worked to help prostitutes get out of the life and adopt mainstream and middle class values along the way. Meanwhile, both COS workers and evangelical reformers sought to hold these women accountable for their transgressions, and used targeted interventions to “save” these women from what they believed would be a dangerous mistake (Hobson, 1987; Pivar, 1973; Wahab, 2002). For example, members of the

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<sup>10</sup> The National Conference of Charities and Corrections was the early name for the National Conference of Social Work.

local COS would hire women in the neighborhood to spy on single and deserted women, to ensure that they were not engaging in prostitution or other forms of sexual deviance (Wahab, 2002).

Similar to the COSs, settlement houses, which originated in the US in 1886, were another mechanism through which members of the middle and upper class (primarily women) sought to assist the poor. Jane Addams, the progressive reformer who brought the settlement house model to Chicago in 1889, aspired to help recent European immigrants adapt to life in the United States. In the settlement house model, reformers and recent immigrants lived in the same neighborhood interdependently, and reformers sought to share knowledge and information with their less well-to-do neighbors. In contrast to their COS counterparts, Addams and other progressive reformers maintained that poverty was a result of the external environment and structural conditions of the poor; not a product of moral failing (Addams, 1910; Muncy, 1991). Addams wanted settlement workers and poor individuals to influence each other, noting that the Hull House settlement was “soberly opened on the theory that the dependency of classes on each other is reciprocal; and that as the social relationship is essentially a reciprocal relation, it gives a form of expression that has peculiar value” (Addams, 1910, p. 53). In other words, Addams felt that living among the poor, in their environment, would result in as much benefit to the settlement workers as it does to the poor and immigrant populations that they were working with.

Addams and other settlement workers were less judgmental of the habits of the poor than were the evangelical reformers and the COS workers (Wahab, 2002), as they did not seek to reprimand those who did not fall into line with their values. This is also true for prostitution—Addams did not consider prostitution a moral failing, but did agree with her COS counterparts in believing that prostitution was a form of sexual slavery that was an unacceptable “choice” for

women. In her book *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*, Addams states the following: “Throughout this volume the phrase ‘social evil’ is used to designate the sexual commerce permitted to exist in every large city, usually in a segregated district, wherein the chastity of women is bought and sold” (Addams, 1912, p. 1). Taking a more scientific and medical approach to the topic than COS reformers, she goes on to note that:

“Modern philanthropy, continually discovering new aspects of prostitution through the aid of economics, sanitary science, statistical research, and many other agencies, finds that this increase of knowledge inevitably leads it from the attempt to rescue the victims of white slavery to a consideration of the abolition of the monstrous wrong itself. At the present moment philanthropy is gradually impelled to a consideration of prostitution in relation to the welfare and the orderly existence of society itself. If the moral fire seems at times to be dying out of certain good old words, such as charity, it is filling with new warmth such words as social justice, which belong distinctively to our own time.” (p. 1)

Instead of focusing on the perceived failings of women who were “tricked” into prostitution, Addams believed that by improving the economic and social conditions of society as a whole, prostitution could be eliminated. Addams and other settlement house workers were more likely than other reformers to emphasize the poor economic conditions that may lead young women into prostitution. For instance, Addams explained in her work that a woman in prostitution could earn seven to fifteen times more than a woman who worked in a department store, making prostitution appear to be a viable option for many poor and working class women (Addams, 1912). Addams and other settlement workers sought to collect data on prostitutes, conforming to the belief espoused by many early social workers that scientific data collection was important to legitimize their profession. As historian Barbara Hobson describes in *Uneasy Virtue*, Addams and other reformers ended their studies of prostitution with the firm belief that sexual exploitation, including prostitution, would eventually be eliminated from society (Hobson,

1987). Hobson goes on to state that while their studies were meant to collect important statistics on prostitution, “hidden agendas, unconscious motivations, and assumptions about sexual and social relationships permeated the social laboratory in prostitution studies” (p. 155). Similarly, Wahab (2002) notes that when analyzing data they received from the prostitutes as to why the women entered the profession, they were negatively biased; the researchers coded their results into categories of degeneracy, weakness of character and laziness (Hobson, 1987; Wahab, 2002).<sup>11</sup>

These progressive reformers and social researchers, including Addams, also concluded that many women were forced into prostitution through the “white slave trade” (Brandt, p. 33), a term which neatly coincided with notions of female purity, assuming that no woman would choose to enter prostitution. The narrative of white slavery corresponded with a common belief that there was a large contingent of European immigrants engaged in a trafficking industry with women’s bodies—narratives around this concept included the description of men searching for vulnerable women and girls who may be susceptible to the luxuries promised in life in the sex trade, such as “men with hypodermic needles waiting to drug and abduct their prey in darkened movie theaters or subways” (Hobson, 1987, p. 142). Supposedly, there was a widespread problem in the US where women were transported over state lines for the purposes of prostitution. These narratives led to the eventual passage of the Mann Act in 1910, a federal law

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<sup>11</sup> *The Social Evil In Chicago* (1911) is peppered (with the benefit of hindsight, often humorously so) with numerous judgments upon women who entered prostitution. For instance, in the section on “How Women Enter Lives of Prostitution through the Saloon”, they note that the women who frequent saloons and then enter prostitution are ‘weak morally with a strong desire for drink’.

that prohibited the transport of any female across state lines for immoral purposes or prostitution.<sup>12</sup>

In the midst of the promotion of this white slavery narrative, in January 1910 there was a meeting held at the YMCA in Chicago that included clergy members from six hundred congregations in Chicago, social workers, physicians, and social reformers demanding that action be taken on prostitution and other vice in the city (The Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911). This resulted in the establishment of a vice commission, the first task force in the country that was created solely to investigate the status of the “social evil” of prostitution. This commission divided its task into multiple components: 1) describing the existing conditions of the “social evil” in Chicago 2) describing the relationship between the “social evil” and the saloon 3) describing the relationship between the “social evil” and the police 4) describing the sources of supply of prostitution 5) describing the involvement of youth, and how to protect youth from vice 6) how to rescue and reform individuals involved in this vice economy and 7) the medical aspects of the “social evil”. To begin, the introduction and summary of the vice commission has the following introductory heading: “Constant and Persistent Repression of Prostitution the Immediate Method: Absolute Annihilation The Ultimate Ideal” (The Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911, p. 25). The fear that the Vice Commission has of prostitution is quite panic-stricken, as exemplified in the following paragraph:

“The honor of Chicago, the fathers and mothers of her children, the physical and moral integrity of the future generation demand that

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<sup>12</sup> By including the prohibition of transporting women for immoral purposes in the Mann act, this worked to criminalize interstate travel of any persons suspected of being in a premarital or extramarital relationship. This Act went essentially unchanged until 1986, when the language was made gender neutral, and the only interstate transportation that was to be criminalized was “any sexual activity for which anybody can be charged with a criminal offense” (Weiner, March 11, 2008).

she repress public prostitution. Prostitution is pregnant with disease, a disease infecting not only the guilty, but contaminating the innocent wife and child in the home with sickening certainty almost inconceivable; a disease to be feared with as a great horror as a leprous plague; a disease scattering misery broadcast, and leaving in its wake sterility, insanity, paralysis, the blinded eyes of little babes, the twisted limbs of deformed children, degradation, physical rot and mental decay” (p. 25)

The researchers created a complete census of all “houses of ill-fame, flats and assignation houses, with the names of owners, keepers and inmates” (p. 69), interviewed prostitutes about their family and past employment history, clandestinely observed conditions in saloons and dance-halls, detailed the precise immigration patterns of foreign born prostitutes, and detailed findings of juveniles found in the red-light district. The Vice Commission describes issues with prostitution that remain similar to those discussed in the present day, noting that:

“The first truth that the Commission desires to impress upon the citizens of Chicago is the fact that prostitution in this city is a *Commercialized Business* of large Dollars per year, controlled largely by men, not women... In juxtaposition with this group of professional male exploiters stand ostensibly respectable citizens, both men and women, who are openly renting and leasing property for exorbitant sums, and thus sharing, through immorality of investments, that profits from this *Business*. A Business which demands a supply of five thousand souls from year to year to satisfy the lust and greed of men in this city alone.” (p. 25)

Indeed, this focus on “the lust and greed of men” and the fact that the industry is “controlled largely by men” is a strong factor in the discourse of abolitionist feminists today. While the focus today remains less on penalizing women for “immorality” and more on penalizing men for being “professional male exploiters”, I note that the latter perspective has not changed considerably over the past century. As the Vice commission notes: “She suffers, but what of him? She goes down and is finally sacrificed to a life of shame, but what of him? He escapes as a ‘romancer’” (The Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911, p. 44). Progressive reformers,

including Addams, bemoaned this unequal prosecution of women to men in regards to prostitution, an idea that did not catch on again until the 1970s.

Through rigorous data collection, scientific analysis, and the improvement of social conditions for prostitutes, this Vice Commission Task Force sought to find ways in which they could eventually eliminate prostitution<sup>13</sup>. The data that emerged from the work of the Vice Commission resulted in a concerted effort to shut down saloons and dance halls in the red light district as noted by early Chicago School sociologist Walter Reckless (Reckless, 1933). Some reformers felt that the closure of dance halls and saloons was a significant success of the work of the task force. However, this focus on scientific data and statistical analysis to “solve” the problems of prostitution was not sustainable. Economic legislation failed to disincentivize women from entering prostitution. The Mann Act proved to be largely ineffectual, as “little solid evidence of a fully organized trafficking of women ever materialized” (Brandt, 1987, p. 34), and “it became evident that the majority of prostitutes had not been trapped unknowingly in houses of bondage” (Hobson, 1987, p. 142). Additionally, the shutting down of the red light district resulted in prostitution being pushed to more marginal and dangerous parts of the city, not its elimination (Mumford, 1997; Reckless, 1933). The image of the man in a dark alley combined with the prostitute held in bondage proved largely to be the images of an ineffectual moral panic that led to the creation of public policies that served to demonize sex workers, instead of

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<sup>13</sup> The Vice Commission does attempt to include recommendations, such as the provision of higher wages and “more humane treatment of extra-conjugal maternity” (p. 283) that would assist women economically, thus precluding their entry into prostitution. For instance, the Vice Commission states “One of the chief reasons why girls enter the life of prostitution is evidently the economic one. They cannot live on the wages paid them...an investigation should be made of all establishments employing girls and young unmarried men, for the purposes securing accurate figures as to the salaries paid, hours of work, including overtime....it should be determined what should be the living wage for this particular class of workers, and if such an investigation were made public, it would assist in creating an ‘industrial conscience’ and would educate the community to demand the living wage” (p. 282).

abolishing the sex trade. Finally, in an effort to collaborate with other groups (including law enforcement and religious institutions) to stamp out prostitution, the Progressive reformers inadvertently helped to increase state power to suppress prostitution, resulting in increased penalties and arrests of prostitutes (Hobson, 1987; Jabour, 2013).

### **Historical Policy Responses to Prostitution: 1914 until 1970**

Upon the onset of WWI, extending into WWII, the focus of reformers shifted from rescuing women in the sex trade, to stopping their supposed spreading of venereal disease (Brandt, 1987; Hobson, 1987). As noted by historian Dorothy Brown, during WWI the Federal Commission on Training Camp Activities rounded up prostitutes to protect soldiers from venereal disease, which they perceived to be the greatest threat to man power (Brown, 1987). During and between the two world wars, the national mentality around prostitution shifted from a victim mentality to a criminal mentality, as most efforts were put into place to prevent soldiers from contacting so-called “diseased” women. Women who were walking alone near military bases were labeled as prostitutes, and were targeted for arrest. They were then forced to undergo mandatory testing and medical examination regardless of whether or not they actually engaged in sexual activity or prostitution, and could be held without bail until results were known. During this period, legal systems put in place to deal with prostitution were almost exclusively used to control the tide of venereal disease. The path of disease was always assumed to go from prostitute to customer, despite the fact that it was purportedly men that suffered from uncontrolled sexuality (Hobson, 1987).

For women who were tasked to work with prostitutes, the shifting nature of the prostitute’s identities, from victim to criminal, led to different types of reform and rescue work from the Progressive Era. Women reformers held chaperoned entertainment activities near military training camps in order to prevent illicit sexual contact between single women and



soldiers. Even for these reformers, the focus remained on preventing the tide of venereal disease in order to protect soldiers. A positive test for venereal disease for a prostitute was considered to be sufficient evidence for a loss of rights (Hobson, 1987). The implementation of these punishments often led to a cognitive dissonance among reformers: they discussed the need for women's political and social rights when engaging in prostitution, while also advocating for increased criminalization of the sex trade to prevent disease spread (Hobson, 1987).

Also important in the development of current sex work policy and discrimination against sex workers is the historical treatment that was specific to black prostitutes. The Vice Commission of Chicago noted back in 1911 that "the history of the social evil in Chicago is intimately connected with the colored population" (The Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911, p. 38), something which historian Cynthia Blair notes expanded greatly through the 1920s (Blair, 2010). While white female prostitutes were often "victims" that needed to be rescued, black female prostitutes in Chicago were either ignored or codified as deviants, individuals more deserving of arrest than rehabilitation. In fact, outside of the previous quote mentioned, the Vice Commission ignored the individual experiences of black women in prostitution, failing to describe how the sex trade may have impacted their lives (Mumford, 1997). Their silence around the issue exemplified their lack of concern regarding black prostitutes, despite the fact that the population was growing. In 1920, black women made up two percent of the female population, and were between 16-20 percent of all women arrested for prostitution (Mumford, 1997). According to Blair's analysis of arrest statistics of prostitutes in the City of Chicago, African American women were one-third of all women arrested as prostitutes in 1922, one-half of all women arrested for prostitution in 1924, and by the end of the Great Depression, they made up 78 percent of all women that were arrested for prostitution. During this time, black women were

only 3-4 percent of the female population in Chicago (Blair, 2010, p. 223; Mumford, 1997). It is important to note this history of increased criminalization of black prostitutes, as this continues to play out in Chicago, considering that black women are disproportionately targeted by prostitution arrests; in statistics released in 2010 by the Chicago Police Department, black women were 64 percent of women arrested for prostitution, and 43 percent of all persons arrested for prostitution (Chicago Police Department, 2010, p. 35; Linehan, 2006; O'Leary & Howard, 2001). According to the US Census, black women made up about 17 percent of the total population of Chicago in 2010.

The increase of the number of black prostitutes arrested in Chicago during this time was due to several factors. First, the number of black women in the sex trade ballooned between 1900 and 1930 as more black individuals migrated from the Southern states to Northeastern and Midwest cities (such as Chicago). Unlike their male counterparts, black women were unable to find work in the industrial economy and either languished in low skilled service work or unskilled labor (Blair, 2010; Canaan, 2001). Some combined prostitution with regular day work in order to make ends meet (Blair, 2010; Wolcott, 2001). In general, black women struggled to find well-paying work at this time, and many turned to the sex trade as an option for survival.

However, the increase of black women in the sex trade during this time does not correspond to the increased arrest rate. This stems from the second reason why there was an increase in the arrests of black prostitutes—they encountered far more police harassment than white prostitutes, even when they worked in the same area (Blair, 2010; Willrich, 2003). Among law enforcement, there was a belief that black women were more likely to be diseased, and they were thus targeted for arrest more often than white women. Finally, with the moral panic over vice districts, law enforcement and politicians began to work to police red light areas, shutting

them down; as a result, prostitutes (both black and white) dispersed to more marginalized areas of the city in order to work. Black prostitutes often worked in teams, and coordinated daily schedules with each other, eschewing male protection as well as outside control of their earnings. Moreover, black women were largely excluded from taxi dance halls and as call girls in private apartments, which pushed them into less safe areas of the sex trade (Jabour, 2013). Their proclivity to work independently without male protection, in less safe areas resulted in decreased protection and increased visibility among police officers, concluding in increased arrest (Blair, 2010). Blair notes that “African American women tended to work in areas of the trade most vulnerable to police harassment” (p. 231-232), and goes on to argue that moral interventions and behavioral reforms that would have targeted many of these sex workers, completely ignores the economic hardships that led to many black sex workers to enter prostitution in the first place.

Of course, the issue of black women in prostitution was “solved” through arrest, while the focus on “reforming” prostitutes continued to center primarily on white women. From the 1920s until the 1960s, the focus on prostitution and prostitutes centered on the rehabilitation of fallen women, views often espoused by psychiatrists and criminologists. Moreover, the concerns around the professionalization of social work during this era resulted in a focus on individual casework and medical models of treatment, shaping the way in which prostitution was viewed. The focus of prostitution treatment during this period shifted to a focus on psychoanalytic theory, using theories around the Oedipal complex and women’s hypersexuality/sexual frigidity to describe women’s entry into prostitution (Hobson, 1987; Wahab, 2002). Studies of the personality characteristics of individual prostitutes became more frequent, and less attention was paid to their environment—women were assumed to enter prostitution because of deviant personality traits or family factors, such as being raised by divorced parents or in an

unsupportive home. In contrast to the studies of the Progressive era, the idea that there could be economic reasons for entering prostitution largely fell to the wayside. Harold Greenwald, a psychotherapist who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the psychology of prostitutes, noted that they were largely devoid of any serious personality flaws—but he claimed that all of them were devoid of maternal love and support (Greenwald, 1958). Frank Caprio, a psychiatrist, claimed that prostitutes were women trying to hide homosexual tendencies (Caprio, 1954).

Psychoanalytic studies of prostitution during the 1950s tended to follow this kind of logic: there was a general recognition that prostitutes may be able to choose a life of this type of work (indeed, Greenwald notes that it paid more highly than much of the secretarial work available to women), yet this was the result of an ingrained delinquency or family dysfunction. During this time, there was little engagement with the political or economic characteristics of prostitutes or prostitution—this changed during with the onset of the social movement revolution in the 1960s.

### **Feminist Sex Wars, 1960s until the Present**

During the late 1960s, prostitution became a topic of discussion among a changing social and political landscape. The discussion around sex work and prostitution nationally and globally has been, and continues to be highly polarized (Barry, 1979; Bernstein, 2007; Chapkis, 1998; Doezema, 2005; Dworkin, 1989; Jolin, 1994; MacKinnon, 1987; Nagle, 1997; Overall, 1992; Weitzer, 2000). Over the past five decades, this topic has divided women's and feminist coalitions (Bernstein, 2010; Weitzer, 2007), and has forced many institutions and organizations to take different sides on prostitution. On one side of the debate, are those activists that believe the provision of sexual services constitutes a type of labor and should be subject to the same rights, health benefits and work provisions that are afforded other professions. The term “sex work” emerged in the 1970s as a result of the efforts of Carol Leigh (1997), who coined the term

in response to her desire to see the provision of sexual services in exchange for material goods be recognized as a legitimate form of labor, as well as to unite sexual laborers of various types under one umbrella term. These activists seek to de-stigmatize and/or decriminalize sex work, reforming all types of sexual commerce into a legitimate line of work. On the other side of the debate are abolitionist feminists who believe that the existence of prostitution negates the capacity for choice into the sex trade, and is the natural conclusion of male supremacy—this view, which seeks to criminalize individuals who purchase sexual services, is similar to the views of COS and settlement workers of the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The laws around prostitution in the US tend to favor individuals and organizations that align with the abolitionist view point. This more powerful abolitionist coalition points to sex worker rights' activists as anti-woman, whose views will benefit a small privileged portion of those that work in the sex trade (Bernstein, 2007, 2010; Majic, 2014b; Moran, August 29, 2015). Thus, the decriminalization of sex work, which is the ultimate policy goal of sex worker rights advocates, has been minimally discussed in the US, much less implemented in state policy. The following sections will detail national activism within both of these debates, leading up to where the debate falls in the city of Chicago, the site of this dissertation.

### ***National Context of Sex Worker Rights Activists***

The sex worker rights movement was part of a wave of activist efforts among deviant populations, including LGBTQ groups, poor people's movements, mental health service recipients, and marijuana users to demand human and civil rights. These movements were set off by many social and legal liberalizing trends of the 1960s and 1970s (Jenness, 1993). The sex worker rights movement in the US was unofficially started on Mother's Day in 1973, as an organization called Call off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) was founded in San Francisco by

a former sex worker named Margo St. James (Hobson, 1987). This organization was initially known as a “prostitutes’ rights” organization, and it came as a surprise to scholars, media representatives and mainstream public officials who expressed shock that such a marginalized population, or “deviants” as some would refer to them, would come to advocate so vehemently for social, economic and civil rights. As Kitsuse (1980) expressed in his presidential address at the Society for Social Problems: “Given our sociological conceptions on the effects of societal reactions on deviants, who would have thought that prostitutes would lobby the halls of government buildings to denounce ‘your tired old ethics?’” (p. 2). Theories on deviance stemming from Erving Goffman to Howard Becker tended to empathize with the deviants, but their empathy also resulted in labeling them as passive recipients of shame and stigma who rarely tried to contradict their position in life (Weitzer, 1991). The new phenomenon of deviant populations trying to advocate and demand their own rights was perplexing. The efforts of prostitutes “coming out” and demanding their own rights was very new in the 1970s, and COYOTE in particular garnered a great deal of media attention as a result (Jenness, 1990).

COYOTE remains the first and most well known of all of the prostitutes rights groups in the United States (Hobson, 1987; Jenness, 1993). Jenness (1993) discussed the issues that concerned members of COYOTE: first, “defining the law as the source of prostitute’s victimization” (p. 41), second, “proposing prostitution as voluntary chosen service work”, (p.65) and finally, “countering assertions that prostitutes represent pools of contagion” (p. 85). COYOTE accomplished a significant number of tasks in the early years of the organization: they worked with the ACLU to protest police harassment of prostitutes and discriminatory arrests of women, they worked with NOW to strengthen lobbying efforts to pass the Equal Rights

Amendment (ERA), and they worked with other human rights advocates to oppose mandatory testing of sex workers for AIDS.

According to multiple sources, COYOTE's director, Margo St. James, was a charismatic force as well as a proficient organizer and fundraiser (Chateauvert, 2014; Jenness, 1993; Majic, 2014b). Despite the illegality of prostitution, she was able to organize "Hookers' Balls", where Hollywood elites (such as actress Jane Fonda and director Francis Ford Coppola), self-described hookers, and even political officials in San Francisco partook in a masquerade ball; she was sought out by media and newspaper for interviews (including the famous 1980s era talk show Donohue); she was invited by government and nonprofit organizations to talk about prostitution reform; and she created a newsletter called COYOTE Howls which provided a way for the organization to connect and communicate with their members. In all of these forums, she discussed the need to talk about sex work as *work* in order to develop human rights for sex workers. In the early years of COYOTE, members took a peer support approach to organizing, providing a safe space where sex workers could discuss their experiences. This included a 24-hour emergency phone line called the "Survival Line for Independent Prostitutes" (SLIP) that offered legal assistance to women that were arrested (Chateauvert, 2014).

However, despite the charisma of St. James, the success of the Hooker's Balls, and COYOTE's presence in the media, COYOTE had difficulty recruiting and maintaining members, raising funds, and forming organizational allies (Weitzer, 1991). While COYOTE's early advocacy efforts revolved around civil rights for sex workers, with the onset of AIDS during the 1980s (along with the scapegoating that prostitutes received for heterosexual transmission of the AIDS virus), COYOTE shifted their focus to a larger public health approach, an approach which was increasingly palatable to government funders (Majic, 2014b). Gloria Lockett and Priscilla

Alexander, two COYOTE members, were at the forefront of the effort to educate peers and community members about ways to prevent HIV/AIDS. While members fervently dismissed the idea that prostitutes were to blame for heterosexual transmission for the disease and tried to convey this to the public through their public advocacy efforts, they also acknowledged that sex workers needed to engage in their own HIV-prevention efforts. COYOTE members held discussion groups with street based sex workers about the virus, and they handed out condoms and informational brochures—eventually, their presence in the community led to their recognition by the state and the “mainstream health establishment” (Majic, 2010, p. 25; 2014b; Stoller, 1998).

In 1984, as a result of their efforts educating (and to a lesser extent, politicizing) their constituency, COYOTE members were approached by the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) for help reaching sex workers (Stoller, 1998). The CDC, under a project called Project Aware, was interested in “mapping prostitutes with HIV” (Foley, 2013, p. 288) and the collaboration between COYOTE and the CDC led to the creation of a new organization: the California Prostitutes Education Project (CAL-PEP) (Majic, 2010). In order to reach marginalized populations that may be effected by the AIDS crisis, Project AWARE hired former and current prostitutes from COYOTE, training and educating them about safe sex and HIV prevention (Stoller, 1998). This collaboration and the increased funding stemming from it, resulted in the ability to reach an increased number of individuals, while also leading to the formalization of some of COYOTE’s core functions (Majic, 2010). Although CAL-PEP was thought to be a one-time project, the organization received a \$30,000 grant from San Francisco in 1985, which allowed the agency to continue their work providing condoms and information about HIV/AIDS to individuals in the street economy in the Tenderloin neighborhood in San Francisco (Majic, 2014b). By 1988, CAL-



PEP had grants from the CDC, the California Department of Health Services, and the National Institute for Drug Abuse (Majic, 2014b).

Of course, this recognition from the state did not come without controversy. Majic (2014b) notes in an interview with CAL-PEP executive director Gloria Lockett that many COYOTE members were unhappy with the money from the government, primarily because government is not supportive of decriminalization of prostitution. Members were afraid if the government had control of their money, they would be dissuaded from pursuing their advocacy objectives (p. 36). Indeed, the overall result of CAL-PEP's relationship with the state is that they did focus more of their time and energy on service provision. In the early stages of the organization staff and board largely came from COYOTE activists; by 1992 there were no COYOTE activists on the board (Majic, 2014a). Yet, they did not reject their goal of sex worker rights. In 1995, the San Francisco Task Force of Prostitution was created, to address problems of street prostitution in the city. It was through the work and testimony of members of COYOTE and CAL-PEP, among other "prostitute representatives" (The San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution, 1996, p. 6) that it was decided that prostitution remain a low priority for arrests in San Francisco, and that they would benefit from increased social services. The task force executive summary concludes as such:

"The Task Force therefore recommends that the City departments stop enforcing and prosecuting prostitution crimes. It further recommends that the departments instead focus on the quality of life infractions about which neighborhoods complain and redirect funds from prosecution, public defense, court time, legal system overhead and incarceration towards services and alternatives for needy constituencies" (The San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution, 1996, p. 6).

With the decision that more social services were needed for prostitutes in San Francisco, the St. James Infirmery (SJI), a peer health clinic created by and for sex workers, was started in

1999. SJI began by offering its health services in city clinic offices, eventually moving to its own space in 2002 (Majic, 2010). SJI, although it is a government funded health and human service agency, continues to maintain a commitment to sex worker rights and sex work decriminalization through its health provision efforts. In addition to standard doctor visits, STI testing and health care, SJI offers acupuncture, reiki, therapy, and leadership forums for current and former sex workers, and self care classes for active sex workers. During the rise of health and human service provision for sex workers in San Francisco, COYOTE began to dismantle, and as of 2016, is no longer holding regular meetings. Many former COYOTE members have become involved with CAL-PEP and/or the SJI. CAL-PEP and the St. James Infirmary filled a necessary gap for social services for individuals in street-based economies in San Francisco, and were able to work with mainstream institutions to reach a larger populace. While their focus was no longer solely on the decriminalization of prostitution, they were able to bring a broader perspective on sex workers' rights to institutions that may have had negative pre-conceived notions of sex work. However, research has noted that the deradicalization of formerly radical programs often creates spaces for increasingly radical organizations to emerge (Lune, 2015). Within COYOTE's shadows emerged other sex workers' rights organizations taking up COYOTE's mantle of the decriminalization of sex work. The best known and largest of these organizations is the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP-USA), the Chicago branch of which is one of the advocacy groups discussed in this dissertation.

### ***Creation of the Sex Workers Outreach Project***

SWOP-USA is “a national social justice network dedicated to the fundamental human rights of sex workers and their communities, focusing on ending violence and stigma through education and advocacy” (SWOP-USA, 2014, p. 1). SWOP was founded in August 2003 by

Robyn Few, a sex worker and activist who directed the organization until her death in 2012. SWOP refers to their organization as “an anti-violence campaign” (SWOP-USA, 2014, p. 1) that addresses “locally and nationally the violence that sex workers face because of their criminal status.” They primarily advocate for the decriminalization of prostitution, and the general improvement of the labor and human rights conditions of all sex workers, whether their work is legal or criminalized. Their first major action was “to organize the first annual International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers in 2003 with the Green River Memorial to the victims of Gary Leon Ridgeway” (SWOP-USA, 2014, p. 1). SWOP’s second major action was in 2004, when members of SWOP in California pushed for Measure Q, a policy that would have effectively decriminalized prostitution in Berkeley, making the city police treat prostitution as the lowest priority (as prostitution is illegal under California state law, activists could not create a measure that would lead to blanket decriminalization in the city). SWOP members took to the streets, passing out pamphlets, talking to legislators, and attending protests and rallies (Marshall, 2004). While the measure failed by a substantial portion, it led to the realization that sex workers were able to organize and create political visibility. Indeed, in 2008, the efforts of SWOP members resulted in a vote on Proposition K, a proposition which sought to de facto decriminalize prostitution in the larger metropolis in San Francisco—while this effort was unsuccessful, it demonstrates the recurring influence that sex workers are able to have on politics within an institutional environment that often denigrates their existence (Chateauvert, 2014).

SWOP continues these political actions and peer-support efforts both nationally and locally, and although very few of these organizations have made a dent in local policy, their presence in various cities underscores a small but vocal opposition to the predominant policy approach to criminalized and/or abolish prostitution. In little more than a decade, the local and

national chapters of SWOP-USA have accomplished a variety of actions: these include calling for an embargo on the video game Grand Theft Auto-Vice City because of its encouragement of murdering prostitutes (Surette, 2006), promoting community discussion on the effects of Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) for individuals that engage in the sex trade (Albarazi, 2016), holding public events on the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers (IDEVASW), the Sex Workers Trans Day of Remembrance (SWTDR), and International Sex Workers Rights Day (SWRD) (Carmichael, 2014; "International Sex Worker Rights Day Marked in Denver," 2016; Wilson, 2014), providing school supplies and backpacks to the children of sex workers (SWOP Orlando, 2016), and providing prison and jail support for sex workers that become involved in the criminal justice system.

SWOP-USA remains a primarily political organization, although the national chapter does have 501c3 status.<sup>14</sup> As of 2016, SWOP-USA has thirty-three local chapters (including SWOP-Chicago), all of which share a similar mission of decriminalizing and destigmatizing prostitution. That said, their message of decriminalizing prostitution involves working against a much more politically powerful coalition of feminists, religious leaders, politicians and nonprofits that denounce the decriminalization of prostitution.

### ***Opposition to Sex Work***

While the sex workers rights movement is often considered a parallel to the gay rights movement that began around the same time, they have not achieved nearly the same number of gains. Prostitution is still criminalized; all sex workers continue to be stigmatized; and it is often the seller of sex, a person who occupies a more vulnerable position in society (typically cis or transgender women) that is arrested. So, who are their opponents? It may be assumed that sex

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<sup>14</sup> Local chapters of SWOP-USA are able to get 501c3 status through a fiscal sponsorship with SWOP. This is something that SWOP-Chicago was able to take advantage of.

worker activists would find themselves most in conflict with religious institutions and moral majority politicians. While conservatism and right-wing politics are certainly part of what sex worker activists are working against, traditional conservatives are often not the primary group of which sex worker activists find themselves in conflict. Instead, activists most commonly tangle with other feminist groups and individuals; those that advocate for the abolishment of sex work, often in ways that harken back to the history of how social workers have understood prostitution and the women who engage in it.

Interestingly, the inception of the sex workers' rights movement started at the peak of the second wave feminist movement, whose members are often now at the forefront of calling for abolishment of prostitution (Chateauvert, 2014). However, during the early years of the second wave movement, there was frequent collaboration between groups like COYOTE and groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW). Feminist activists, including Gloria Steinem, called for the decriminalization of sex work in the early 1970s, and NOW, after some deliberation, called for the decriminalization of sex work in 1973. Yet, as the remainder of this section will illustrate, their views would largely evolve over the next several decades.

The abolitionist<sup>15</sup> narrative emerged in the “sex wars” of the 1980s and 1990s, debates around women’s participation in pornography, and later, sex work generally. According to Abrams (1995), the controversy began in 1982, at a conference at Barnard College called “Toward a Politics of Sexuality”, culminating into the inception of the feminist anti-pornography movement in the mid-1980s. According to the abolitionist narrative around sex work, no person would ever voluntarily choose to enter the sex trade, but rather can only become one either

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<sup>15</sup> The term abolitionism was used during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to describe efforts by feminists to eliminate prostitution—it has seen been repurposed by factions of feminists who believe prostitution is a type of slavery, and that it must be abolished.

through some form of forced coercion (Barry, 1979; Hughes & Raymond, 2001; MacKinnon, 1987). Prostitution embodies women's subordination to men, as they consider all forms of the sex trade to be violent, abusive, and exploitative. While many abolitionists acknowledge that many individuals enter prostitution as a result of economic circumstances, they are more likely to argue that it is as a result of individual male pimps tricking women into sexual slavery (Bernstein, 2010). The abolitionist viewpoint comes with two primary policy solutions: 1) the decriminalization of the seller of sexual services—as she is often forced into the sex trade she should not be held liable for her actions and 2) the increased criminalization of pimps, traffickers and purchasers of sexual services, (whom they refer to as “johns”), often in the form of fines or jail time. Abolitionists have also proposed and implemented other solutions around these issues, such as rehabilitation of individuals arrested for prostitution, or “john schools”, classes that men who have been arrested for prostitution are mandated to take which seeks to educate them about the consequences of purchasing sex (Majic, 2014c). While abolitionists share the same concerns that sex workers rights activists do around the violence committed against sex workers, they propose different solutions to deal with this violence.

In the 1980s, the Meese Report, the report commissioned by the Reagan administration in order to detail the harmful effects of pornography, provided a circumstance in which conservative Christians, right wing politicians, and abolitionist feminists combined forces to denounce the harms committed to women through pornography (Bernstein, 2010; Vance, 1997). This began a decades long collaboration of secular abolitionist feminists with conservative politicians and religious groups. As Bernstein (2010) notes, “the feminist embrace of state-anchored sexual moralism is particularly apt to resurface during periods of right-wing ascendancy like the Reagan and Bush years when opportunities for more substantive political

and economic change are elusive” (p. 53). Although their work on reproductive justice was stymied by more conservative forces during their ascendancy, they were successful in capitalizing on the interest that conservatives had in sexual moralism, and international humanitarian “rescue” politics.

The abolitionist narrative was codified during the 1990s and 2000s, when an increased attention to sex trafficking led to the creation of a variety of anti-trafficking coalitions and service agencies which adhered to the abolitionist viewpoint around the sex industry, arguing that its very existence is inherently exploitative and anti-feminist. Feminist advocates of abolitionism capitalized on the interest that conservatives had on this topic, aligning with these partners while promoting similar ideals of punitive carceral policies and sexual moralism. Through the power of these bipartisan coalitions, abolitionist advocates have institutionalized this perspective into policies at all three levels of U.S. government, as well as internationally (Bernstein, 2010; Majic, 2014b). For example, the use of federal funds to advocate for the legalization or decriminalization of prostitution is prohibited by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), while it expands efforts of local law enforcement to find, and arrest traffickers (Majic, 2014b), something which all partners agreed upon.

In 2004, second wave feminist Phyllis Chesler and abolitionist activist Donna Hughes wrote an op-ed in the Washington Post lauding efforts to end sexual slavery by the Bush Administration, while also upholding the anti-Islamic policies that were promoted during this era, proclaiming: “Many feminists are out of touch with the realities of the war that has been declared against the secular, Judeo-Christian, modern West. They are still romanticizing and cheering for Third-World anti-colonialist movements, without a realistic view of what will happen to the global status of women if the Islamists win” (Chesler & Hughes, 2004, p. 1). They go on,

concluding that: “We must recognize that prostitution is inherently harmful. We must actively oppose the traffickers, the pimps and the men who patronize the brothels...Feminists are right to support reproductive rights and sexual autonomy for women, but they should stop demonizing the conservative and faith-based groups that could be better allies on some issues than the liberal left has been.” In creating these bridges between neoliberal global policies around the promotion of Western values and ending the sex trade, abolitionists created a successful and palatable platform through which to combine political forces among groups with whom they may not have initially thought to collaborate with, making it part of a bipartisan political discourse.

Despite their advocacy around decriminalization in the 1970s, many feminist activists would change their views on prostitution throughout the years. According to a profile written by Jane Kramer in the *New Yorker*, Gloria Steinem believes that it is unlikely that anyone chooses to be a sex worker, and advocates for the abolitionist “End Demand” policies currently in vogue among secular feminists (Kramer, 2015). Despite her early views to decriminalize prostitution, Steinem (along with a variety of other celebrity feminists) signed a pledge against Amnesty International’s proposal for full decriminalization of prostitution. As for NOW, the official charter states that prostitution should be decriminalized, yet this has been reflected differently by different chapters throughout the years (Nagle, 1997). For instance, in 2007, NOW-NYC was on the frontlines of seeking to prohibit online and print advertising for sex workers in *New York Magazine* and the *Village Voice* (Rudder, 2005).<sup>16</sup> Fast forward eight years later, and Sonia Ossorio, president of NOW-NYC, wrote a (unpublished)<sup>17</sup> letter to the editor to the *New York Times* in response to Emily Bazelon’s article “Should Prostitution be a Crime?” (Bazelon, 2016)

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<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, the original document that NOW-NYC published around this issue can no longer be found on the website, and appears to have been removed from linked documents.

<sup>17</sup> The letter, written on NOW-NYC letterhead, was published on a website called prostitutionresearch.com.



dismissive of legalization.<sup>18</sup> She stated that she does “support the decriminalization for individuals who are selling sex on their own terms or exploited at the hands of boyfriends, pimps and traffickers,” going on to note that “full legalization, as advocated by Bazelon, opens the door to expand opportunities for promoters and buyers of commercial sex, while denying the reality of the far greater numbers of women and girls (and men and boys) in prostitution for whom selling sex is the *least* empowering choice that they had had to make” (Ossorio, 2016)<sup>19</sup>. In order to avoid this debate, many NOW chapters currently refrain from commenting on prostitution, instead focusing primarily on less controversial topics (at least for feminists) of reproductive justice, economic empowerment, violence against women, and building women’s leadership.

In addition to second wave feminists, public advocates for abolitionism include Christian (specifically evangelical Christian) individuals and organizations, which conceptualize sex workers in a different, yet complementary way. For feminist abolitionists, sex workers are victims of male supremacy and exploitation. To these individuals, “freedom as a woman is meaningless so long as some of us can be bought and sold” (Hunter, 1993, p. 91), and thus they have worked diligently to end prostitution. For evangelical Christian abolitionists, sex trafficking is conflated with “immoral” sexual activity generally. The supposed immorality of sex work, and the fact that it is considered to be “anti-Christian” initially attracted evangelicals to the cause of sex work and sex trafficking (Zimmerman, 2012). Yet, this interest also resulted from the propensity for younger evangelicals to distance themselves from the controversial social agenda

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<sup>18</sup> When abolitionist feminists characterize the debate between themselves and sex work rights activists, they often characterize them as wanting the legalization of prostitution. While there is no shortage of individuals who would prefer for prostitution to be legalized (which typically indicates regulation and taxation), it is more common for sex worker rights activists to advocate for decriminalization, which will remove all laws on consensual sex work between adults.

<sup>19</sup> In the New York Times article, Bazelon discusses the possibility of decriminalization, not legalization, policies which are often conflated by abolitionist feminists.

of the evangelical Christian right (such as homosexuality and abortion) in order to find common ground with other social justice groups (Bernstein, 2010). What both feminists and evangelical abolitionists have in common is that they often make no distinction between coercive sex trafficking and voluntary sex work. These groups collaborate on the continued enforcement of state mechanisms for surveillance and policing in order to ‘rescue’ sex workers, which scholars state is a direct result of neoliberal politics, both nationally and abroad (Bernstein, 2012; Shih, 2016; Soderlund, 2005).

As a result of the institutionalization of abolitionist policies into political and public discourse, it is unsurprising that sex worker rights advocates have minimal to no access to political representatives and very rarely receive any type of corporate or government funding, at least domestically (for an important exception, see Majic (2014b) and her work on the St. James Infirmary, which does receive city funding). These advocates respond to abolitionist policies by stating that their policies would deny sex workers’ individual agency in making their own economic decisions while their efforts to criminalize purchasers of sex results in driving the industry further underground, precluding this population from obtaining needed social, legal and medical services (Jenness, 1993; Jolin, 1994; 2007; Weitzer, 1991). Local chapters of sex workers rights organizations often operate on shoestring budgets, with all volunteer labor, and struggle to get accepted by more mainstream institutions. I introduce how this dynamic plays out in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

## **Conclusion**

The history of policy and social work responses to prostitution have changed considerably over the past century, although the assumption that sex workers are victims in need of rescue has largely gone unchanged. Regardless of whether or not a person is trafficked, enters

sex work for financial reasons, or freely chooses this labor, the solution of many human service providers, social workers, and public officials was to remove the “victim” from this situation. While the abolitionist perspective is being challenged, with sex workers themselves speaking out against this victim-based logic, and progressive media and international human rights organizations touting the viewpoints of sex workers, there remains a bias against sex workers. Efforts to decriminalize prostitution are immediately shut down, even in progressive strongholds such as Berkeley or San Francisco, CA. Subsequent chapters of this dissertation focus on the responses to human service nonprofits to these debates, and the challenges inherent to addressing these debates in the context of service provision and collaboration with advocacy organizations. A qualitative study of human service providers and activists can contribute to future understandings of how policies around sex work are developed, and how they are understood and implemented by service providers that work with this population.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

### **Research Design**

The research design of this study was divided into three parts: 1) open-ended semi-structured interviews with key staff/volunteers of SWOP-Chicago and End Demand advocacy partners, 2) interviews with HSNP collaborators (and a select sample of non-collaborators), 3) participant observation of SWOP-Chicago, End Demand sponsored events, and meetings, conferences, events and presentations in the Chicagoland area that discuss the topics of sex work and/or sex trafficking, and 4) collection of news and media pieces discussing related issues. Qualitative interviews constituted the bulk of this research, yet used in conjunction with participant observation and document collection and analysis, this multi-method approach helped to shed light on the various mechanisms and processes through which these collaborations occur. I obtained approval for all research activities through the IRB at the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. This research was conducted over a 14-month period from July 2015-September 2016.

### ***Interviews with Advocacy Organizations***

First, I conducted nine semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the board members of SWOP-Chicago. Before the interviews, I provided consent forms (for which each respondent had to verbally consent) that let each of the members know that my primary interest was in their relationships with human service nonprofits in Chicago (Appendix 1A). These interviews averaged a little less than one hour, and included two of the three founding members of SWOP-Chicago (the third founding member now lives outside of Chicago and is no longer part of SWOP-Chicago). Interviews with the board members of SWOP were conducted in-person at a third-party location or an alternative meeting space. These semi-structured interviews consisted

of open-ended questions, allowing for in-depth answers that go beyond a “yes/no” binary (Reinharz, 1992). The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the respondent to go into as much or as little detail as they chose on each question, and lent itself to additional useful information that I did not anticipate. I asked questions in these interviews about collaborations that SWOP currently had (or did not have) with HSNPs, how these collaborations came to fruition, their reasons for collaboration, and what they expected from the organization’s collaborating partners, and current advocacy campaigns. The full interview schedule can be found in Appendix 1B, but examples of questions include: How did they attract interest from these organizations? What are the biggest drawbacks to working with service nonprofits? What are the biggest benefits? Which organizations do they work with the most? These interviews allowed me to comprehend the respondents’ conceptualization of the idea of HSNP collaborations, while deciphering the deeper meanings about what the respondents told me about the role of collaborations in the organization’s work (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were also used to develop the history of SWOP, and trace its history as a small peer-support network into an advocacy organization, but one that has transitioned into a formal fiscally sponsored 501c3 nonprofit, which has developed and maintained sophisticated relationships with other advocacy organizations and human service providers.

In addition to the interviews with members of SWOP Chicago, I also conducted interviews with advocacy organizations that advocated for the End Demand model. I also contacted members of the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) to be interviewed, but they unfortunately declined to be a part of this project; in its place, I was able to interview four members of End Demand Illinois. Two of the organizations were similar in size to SWOP, while the other two organizations are much larger, but also advocate on behalf of other

policy issues (poverty, immigration reform, homelessness etc.). Interviews with the End Demand Illinois partners took place in person at their organizations, or in one case, over the telephone. The questions I asked respondents at these organizations were similar to the ones I asked of SWOP, namely what their collaborations with other organizations, particularly human service nonprofits, consisted of, how they started, and the benefits and drawbacks. The same interview guide was used for respondents from SWOP-Chicago and End Demand advocates.

### ***Human Service Nonprofit Case Selection and Interviews***

Both End Demand Illinois and SWOP-Chicago work with human service nonprofits to gain support of stakeholders, as well as to place their advocacy agenda in the hands of elites and the general public. I wanted to interview this panoply of human service nonprofits in order to see 1) how they worked with individuals in the sex trade 2) how, and if they collaborated with SWOP, End Demand, or other advocacy organizations working on issues of sex work and sex trafficking 3) how they situated themselves in the debate around sex work and 4) what their general ideology was around service provision.

I selected cases to interview in three different ways. First, I contacted every organization mentioned to me in the interviews with SWOP and End Demand interviews. This includes organizations where SWOP and End Demand organizations conducted educational trainings, or collaborated with, as well as ones that SWOP expressed hesitations about working with.<sup>20</sup> Second, if not mentioned by respondents from the advocacy organizations, I sought out human service nonprofits that were mentioned on their website as allies (in the case of End Demand) or in the Providers (in the case of SWOP-Chicago). Third, I sought out human service nonprofits that were listed in the “Chicago Prostitution and Trafficking Intervention Court Resource Guide”,

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<sup>20</sup> End Demand advocacy organizations did not express hesitation in working with any human service nonprofit.

a guide published by Rape Victim Advocates, an organization that provides services to sexual assault survivors in Chicago. Organizations in this guide often partnered with the End Demand campaign and/or SWOP-Chicago, and there were a few listed that were not acknowledged as collaborators of either. Ultimately, I came up with a list of 82 organizations. I attempted to interview all of these organizations, recruiting organizations through postal mail, email and telephone. I was successful in interviewing 40 individuals at 38 organizations, ending data collection when I hit data saturation.

Interviewing a variety of organizations allows for cross-case comparison, and helped to identify potential barriers to collaboration generally, as well as gauging the knowledge that non-collaborating organizations have about the issues facing individuals involved in the sex trade. Respondents included employees at domestic violence organizations, homeless service organizations, women's health clinics, employment training nonprofits, substance abuse treatment centers, counseling and other mental health centers, immigrant and/or refugee-serving organizations, legal services, and LGBTQ service organizations (a full list of respondents is listed in Appendix 2). I also included employees at two government organizations which I felt were important, as one respondent was working with a human service nonprofit as part of her employment with government and another was a member of a government department that was embarking on a project with sex workers. The latter had been in the process of engaging with collaborative partners in this field, and one of the partners was SWOP-Chicago. In almost all cases, I made it a point to contact the executive director of the organization first, as they would likely be the person in charge of leadership and advocacy of the organization.<sup>21</sup> If the executive director was unavailable for the interview, I often spoke to an advocacy point person, a program

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<sup>21</sup> The only exception to this rule is if I knew that there was a person at the organization that specifically works with individuals in the sex trade.

director, or other high-level staff member. These interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, allowing for specific key points to be expanded upon throughout. The interview guide and consent form for human service nonprofits (including government organizations) can be found in Appendix 1C and 1D, respectively.

The interview began with questions around organizational history, mission and goals. I then asked them to describe their own definition of “feminist” and “social justice” within their organization. Do these organizations consider themselves to be feminist? Is feminism a leading ideology in how they frame their work? This led to the question of whether or not they worked with any individuals in the sex trade. The term, “individual in the sex trade” was developed and disseminated throughout Chicago by the Young Women’s Empowerment Project during the mid 2000s. The idea behind this term is that there are many individuals in the sex industry who neither “choose” nor are “forced” to be in the sex trade. Thus, for many organizations providing services to this population, neither the terms “sex worker” nor “trafficking victim” may apply. I used this term with the human service nonprofit respondents, as I thought it would be the term that best reflected the situations of the individuals that they worked with. I then continued with the interview using the term the respondent used, if different. I also asked respondents about their organization’s experience with the practice of harm reduction. For those organizations that do consider themselves harm reduction practitioners, I wanted to know whether their attitude toward harm reduction principles, which are traditionally associated with drug use, influenced human service work with individuals involved in the sex trade.

After each interview with the HSNP respondents, I asked the respondent a 25-question Harm Reduction Acceptability Scale (HRAS), a five-point Likert-style questionnaire developed by Goddard (2003) to test and evaluate the harm reduction ideology of service providers (See



bottom of Appendix 1D). This scale has high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha=0.877, pretest and 0.929 at posttest) and moderate three-week test-retest reliability ( $r=0.825$ ) (Goddard, Mallott, & Grindle, 2003). I am including this measure as an extra check to see if the leader's approach to harm reduction corresponds with the organization's *stated* approach (or lack thereof) to harm reduction. Because this questionnaire does not address perceptions on harm reduction in the sex work context, I have adapted this questionnaire to include questions about perspectives on sex work within a harm reduction ideology; these questions are analogous to the same questions asked about substance use in the HRAS. (For instance, the question "Should people who live in government funded housing be prohibited from using drugs and alcohol?" became "Should people who live in government funded housing be prohibited from engaging in sex work?"). I decided to allow respondents to reflect upon their answers, while still probing for numerical answers. This allowed me to note questions that may have been confusing or problematic to respondents, or answers that I should consider different reasons for when conducting analysis. This survey was not used in order to obtain generalizable data, but rather to get a glimpse into how a respondent thought about different aspects of harm reduction. Each organization's score is listed in the organizational list in Appendix B. The higher the score, the more they align with harm reduction logics—but it is also the case that there were some questions in which there were no variability. For instance, in Statement 6, "Women in the sex trade cannot be good mothers to infants and young children," all respondents noted that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Scores on the scale ranged from 3.56 to 5. Organizations with an "N/A" score refused to participate in the survey.

### ***Participant Observation***

In addition to these 53 interviews, I conducted participant observation and volunteered SWOP-Chicago. By participant observation, I mean I took part "in the daily activities, rituals,

interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p. 1). Here, explicit culture consists of the aspects of culture that respondents are able to articulate about themselves, while tacit culture is the aspects of culture that remain outside of our general awareness.

Participant observation embeds the researcher in the community they are studying, in order to detail and categorize social processes that are maintained within the community. Participant observation consists of two different processes: participation and observation, and important considerations must distinguish it between pure participation (i.e., “going native”) and pure observation (i.e. observing participants through a one-way mirror) (Bernard, 2006). In distinguishing between the two, Adler and Adler (1987) adopted three different types of membership roles available to research conducting observational research: peripheral membership, active membership, and complete membership. Peripheral members are not involved in the primary and core activities of the group they are studying, active members are involved, yet may not commit themselves entirely to the goals of the groups, while complete members are already members of the group prior to research, or become so during the course of research. In this project, I would identify myself an “active” member.

While qualitative interviews can help articulate what respondents perceive and state is going on in the situation, participant observation can help illuminate the more tacit aspects of culture. The participant observation methodology was crucial in helping me understand what it meant to be an activist in Chicago; particularly an activist around unpopular positions. SWOP is not an organization with regular events, nor is it an organization that is open from 9am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. However, I attended as many meetings, events, protests, and conferences as I was able to around Chicago. I involved myself in non-political activities SWOP

engaged in, such as fundraisers and parties, as well as more confrontational and political activities that they were involved in, such as protests and actions. I attended all general meetings, and volunteered for their outreach project, picking up pastries and clothing, and setting up the outreach table in the neighborhood of East Garfield Park in the West Side of Chicago. I also conducted workshops for human service providers about services to sex workers (typically with another member of SWOP-Chicago), and spoke about similar harm reduction matters to universities and human service nonprofits. I took substantive field notes on observations of meetings, protests, fundraisers, conferences, and content of conversations between myself and other members of the organization.

Becker and Geer's (1957) classic piece on the comparison of participant observation and interviewing notes that "participant observation can thus provide us with a yardstick against which to measure the completeness of data gathered in other ways, a model which can serve to let us know what orders of information escape us when we use other methods" (p. 28). Becker and Geer do not argue that participant observation is necessarily better than interviewing, but rather that the methods used in conjunction can yield superior insights than engaging in interviews alone. My participant observation activities allowed me to go beyond what human service nonprofit members, and SWOP board members told me was happening, and allowed me to see what was actually going on behind the scenes, helping me to clarify the tacit aspects of the culture compared to what was conveyed to me through qualitative interviews. Participant observation also allowed me to document and categorize actions of the participants in my research, and understand different phenomena from their point of view. I was privy to the celebration of successes, private frustrations, intra and inter-group collaboration and conflict, planning fundraisers, planning protests, etc. Participant observation allowed me to categorize,

describe and detail many of these moments, evaluating what this meant for their work on advocacy, and their work with human service providers.

Of course, my participant observation activities went beyond just my involvement with SWOP-Chicago. I was also able to attend conferences and panels that were open to the public—this included anti-trafficking events, harm reduction events, anti-violence events—any event where there was to be some discussion around sex work and/or sex trafficking. Any discussion of these events will be encoded so as not to violate principles of confidentiality. I used this participant observation primarily to assess the discourse in the field around sex work and sex trafficking, and how different groups are constructing their opinions around these issues.

### ***Document Review***

Both the qualitative interviews and the participant observation methods were supplemented with document review of materials produced by SWOP, as well as other sex worker rights organizations across the country, anti-trafficking organizations, harm reduction advocacy groups, and human service nonprofits. Essentially, I tried to capture any information written about service provision and policies relating to sex work and sex trafficking, with special attention spent on Chicago. This includes newspaper and magazine articles, feminist blogs, and radio and television reports.<sup>22</sup>

### **Reflexivity and Subjectivity: The “Insider/Outsider” Dilemma and the Specifics of Participant Observation**

The process of qualitative interviewing and participant observation requires a tremendous amount of reflection upon the researcher. This process involves examining one’s own

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<sup>22</sup> I started this aspect of the project in 2011, and over time noticed an increase in the attention that left-leaning publications, such as *The Nation* (Grant, 2015), *In These Times* (Chen, 2014), *Slate* (Marcotte, 2013), *Jacobin* (Massey, 2014), and the more centrist *New York Times* (Bazon, May 8, 2016) have spent on sex worker rights, challenging the ideologies of anti-trafficking, abolitionist organizations.

“conceptual baggage,” I term I adopt from Kirby and McKenna (1989). Conceptual baggage is “a record of your thoughts and ideas about the research question at the beginning and throughout the research process. It is a process by which you can state your personal assumptions about the topic and the research process” (p. 32). As qualitative research is locally and contextually constructed, the interviews and participant observation are brought together through a process of meaning making between both the researcher and the respondents. Although conventional researcher wisdom would have us ignore or dismiss our biases throughout the research project, I sought to engage with my biases, using them to reflect upon the research process, and the manner in which I engaged with my respondents. During the participant observation process, I also kept what is known as a “reflexivity journal” (Ortlipp, 2008). I wanted to make my thoughts and feelings on the project and the research process transparent, in order to reflect upon theoretical biases that I came into during the project.

Gender and sexual orientation likely both hindered and helped my entry into this world. Many individuals who engage in research of sex work related topics are, like me, cisgender white Western women, which may have resulted in some suspicion, as they are often suspected of wanting to “rescue” sex workers, something SWOP does not believe in. However, due to my prior experience in harm reduction and activism I likely proved myself as someone who had precisely zero interest in “rescuing” anyone from the sex trade. While this certainly helped my entrée into the world of sex worker rights, it came with drawbacks as well. It is possible my previous volunteer work with SWOP led to the primary anti-trafficking organization in Chicago, the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (who SWOP often works to advocate against) refusing to participate in this project. Although my goal in this project was not to detail which approach was preferable to working with sex workers, but rather how advocacy and social

movement organizations sought to gain the support of human service nonprofits, unfortunately, I only have that from the vantage point of one organization (although it is supplemented by interviews with End Demand oriented advocacy organizations), which is a major limitation of this study.

Prior to beginning this project, my personal networks overlapped with many members of SWOP. In addition, being an activist in Chicago on issues of homeless rights, prisoners rights and LGBT rights, afforded me a great deal of respect from the members of SWOP. Throughout the course of my time spent with SWOP, I was treated as a full member (this could also have been due to the fact that I volunteered for pretty much everything, and I aimed to be extremely reliable).

Indeed, this project was emotionally and mentally consuming. I constantly found myself interrogating why I decided to undertake a project with such controversial implications, and one that constantly has people asking “Why are you interested in that,” trying to find something in my background that would legitimize this interest (something my colleagues studying youth development, criminal justice, or homelessness rarely faced). My answer is this: if you have worked in a social service agency, you have almost certainly worked with an individual that has been in the sex trade, whether that is by choice, circumstance or coercion. Thus, it is crucial to understand how those that are in the sex trade advocate for themselves (such as the work facilitated by SWOP), as well as to understand how agencies serving this population work to provide culturally sensitive and competent services to this population.

## **Data Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed by either a professional transcription agency, or myself and analyzed with the help of NVIVO qualitative software.<sup>23</sup> Once transcribed, transcripts were uploaded onto a password-protected computer, and digital recordings were deleted immediately after transcription (if I transcribed the interview) or after comparing the recording with the transcription (if the interview was transcribed by a professional agency). I took extensive field notes immediately after each interview, and returned to those notes upon coding, or if I found new information about the organization (i.e., they had approached SWOP, they had signed a bill, they were engaged in a related advocacy campaign). I also wrote extensive field notes after each related event that I attended, which are included in the analysis. As DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) note, field notes are simultaneously both data and analysis (p. 159). That is, “they are a construction of the ethnographer and are part of the process of analysis,” (p. 159) being a detailed and meticulous record of observations and conversations of the researcher and the participants that can be undertaken in such a way as to clarify and answer research questions.

The second step of data analysis included the creation a series of inductive and deductive codes that I used to analyze interviews and field notes. I coded the interviews and the field notes from the participant observation events: I included theory-driven codes in my analysis, as well as a series of open codes. The theory driven codes include such concepts as “legitimacy”, “resource acquisition”, “harm reduction”, “abstinence”, “social justice”, “definition of feminism”, “service logic”, “collaboration” and other codes directly related to my research questions. In order to capture new insights not included in my initial theoretical framework, I utilized a process of open coding to capture new insights not included in my initial theories, yet emerged during the data-driven analysis (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Patton, 2002). For instance, “professionalization”

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<sup>23</sup> One human service nonprofit respondent declined to be recorded, and thus the analysis of that interview is based on copious notes I took during and after the interview.

was not a concept that was initially a part of the theoretical framework for this study, but strongly emerged from the analysis of the text. As theoretical constructs arose from the data, I wrote additional memos around these new theoretical constructs, as well as connections to existing data.

Analysis consisted of a process of meaning categorization and interpretative analysis (Kvale, 1996), whereby I created dimensions, and themes of analysis, dividing them into subcategories. Theory dimensions included as a result of categorization emerged from the theoretical frameworks I included in this study, as well as additional topics or frameworks that I gleaned from open coding of the text. The categorization of the text allowed me to investigate differences between varying types of service providers, such as religious vs. secular, feminist orientation vs. non-feminist orientation, large budget vs. small budget, etc. harm reduction oriented vs. non-harm reduction oriented, etc.

In addition to this inductive categorization work, I used interpretive analysis to consider what these organizational actions mean, both in terms of what was conveyed to me through the qualitative interviews, as well as what the organizations accomplished in reality through my participation observation. To engage in the deeper meaning of the text, I tried to go beyond what a person said to interpret the latent meaning, with an eye toward the categorization codes that I have created. Upon delineating latent meanings of the text, often the result of multiple readings and codings, I was able to use NVIVO to analyze and preserve the thematic connections made through different data points. The results of analyzing these thematic and conceptual connections helped to structure patterns and themes in the data, making comparisons among different types of organizations. The interviews and observations enabled me to provide different insights into advocacy as it takes currently takes place, and is understood and enacted among organizational



participants. Upon analysis, I brought these results back to members of SWOP, and asked them for any feedback on the analysis that I completed, a process that is commonly referred to as “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In analyzing documents, I used the following concepts to organize these documents: “sex work”, “attitudes towards sex work”, “attitudes towards sex trafficking”, “legislation”, “legislative campaigns”, “feminism”, “social justice”, “criminalization of sex work”, “decriminalization/legalization of sex work.” This analysis was used to gather ideas about what the political and cultural climate, as well as the Chicago context is around sex work/sex trafficking prior to and during participant observation and qualitative interviews.

### **Naming and Pseudonyms**

The identification of subjects in qualitative research has been a topic of debate (Duneier, 1999; Marwell, 2007). In this study, I do not hide the identity of SWOP-Chicago, per their request. All of the human service nonprofits, as well as the additional advocacy organizations in my study (except SWOP) requested confidentiality, and thus I do not identify them by organizational or respondent name. In order to more fully protect their confidentiality, I describe human service nonprofits only according to their primary type of service provision. I refer to board members of SWOP and leaders of End Demand advocacy organizations as such.

### **Limitations**

Like most qualitative studies, these findings are not intended to be generalizable. Each case study has distinctive features, including its historical and geographic context. Additionally, this is not a longitudinal study, so it is difficult to assess the temporality of these organizations’ collaborations and advocacy efforts or organizational change over time. For example, organizations may continue to collaborate with the same advocacy organization, or they may switch alliances, obtain new leadership, or alter their efforts spent at collaboration. Additionally,

this study relies on the reliability and presence of one researcher. The interviews and participation observation may be subject to social desirability bias, where respondents answer questions, or behave in a way they believe will portray them favorably to the researcher, whom they view as having the ability to present them in a certain (favorable) manner. While these particular limitations cannot be avoided I hope the contributions this research will make to the fields of nonprofit organizational research and social work will outweigh these limitations.

Unfortunately, I also lacked access to some of the more prominent End Demand organizers that I had wanted to obtain at the beginning of my research, beyond their public statements. The primary human trafficking task force is completely closed to the public, although I did get permission to attend meetings and observe at one of the subcommittee task forces. I wanted to hear more, to observe more about how anti-trafficking movements worked in practice, and to learn whether or not there was any collaborative potential between the End Demand anti-trafficking activists and sex work activists. In the end I had to rely on the perspectives of several human service providers who successfully collaborated with both End Demand organizations and SWOP to better understand how organizations that straddled this ideologically fraught line grappled with the idea of collaborating with these competing organizations, as well as the insight of four End Demand organizations about their collaborations with other organizations.

## CHAPTER 4: THE STRATEGIC ACTION FIELD OF SEX WORK AND SEX TRAFFICKING IN CHICAGO

### **Introduction**

In June 2016, I attended a public event held by the Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force and Salvation Army featuring a presentation by an expert on LGBTQ youth at the Urban Institute. The event was held at a Christian church in the Gold Coast area of Chicago, near the Museum of Contemporary Art. I arrived just as the event was getting started—the event was free and open to the public but you did have to register. There were about 120 people in the room, a group of individuals that were mostly black and white, and appeared mostly female. I came to find out later that most of the individuals in this room were connected with human service nonprofits that served the LGBTQ community.

The theme that emerged from the presentation was that the primary reason youth entered the sex trade was because of poverty. A theme of starvation was wedded through the narratives chosen by the presenter—she noted that many of the people she interviewed in her project were literally hungry, noting that although many think that we live in a country where starvation is no longer an issue, it certainly is, and the researchers made sure to have food on hand for those that wanted it. She went on to describe how getting in the sex trade is far easier than exiting; for many respondents, no one is forcing or frauding them to enter, but most are hungry and some are riding the trains at night to keep a roof over their head and to stay safe. Many are kicked out of their home and turn to sex work, not because they “want” to, but because they wanted to support themselves, a friend or a family member. She mentioned that were complexities in the sex trade, as there were secondary gains of trading sex, which some of the respondents described. She said that one participant noted that the sex trade was not the worst: it boils down to whether or not you are starving, and that it was as good a way to get money as any. The participant said that it

“was not as bad as being that person without.” Many of her respondents noted that they would prefer to be in the sex trade rather than sell drugs or victimize others. She also noted the negatives of trading that some of her respondents told them. Some had a fear of abuse. Others were cycling in and out of prison. There is also a misconception that these young people would not take other jobs: in contrast, she showed a quote where the young person would work at Burger King if they made a living wage. Young people would be willing to take almost any other job other than sex work, but most did not have any other work that was available to them.

The presenter gave a range of recommendations resulting from this project, ranging from developing accessible services, providing peer led outreach, ending arrest based responses of youth involved in the sex trade, increasing the number of mobile outreach vans, raising awareness of PrEP, and establishing more mental health counseling. In this presentation, particularly in the recommendations, there were a lot of similarities with some of the language that SWOP uses around sex work, specifically the description of the complexities of sex work, the fact that many of the respondents did not consider themselves exploited, and the harmful experiences that the youth experienced as a result of the punitive criminal justice system. She furthermore emphasized the necessity of harm reduction in working with the youth—nuance around sex work, harm reduction, and the harmful implications of the criminal justice system are all ideas that are emphasized by SWOP. However, the presenter also denounced the harms of the “happy hooker” and empowerment myths, seemingly referring to sex worker rights organizations that she felt promoted these ideas.

The diversity of opinions among the human service nonprofit staff in the room was palpable during the question and answer part of the presentation. No one argued with the results that the presenter showed in her study: but there were some debates among some specifics that

could be mapped onto an abstinence vs. harm reduction approach. While the presenter and her colleagues were strongly supportive of harm reduction focused practices, the implications that stemmed from this study was that the sex trade was harmful, and should be abolished.

Attendees from this presentation were part of organizations within what is termed the “strategic action field” (SAF) of sex work and sex trafficking in Chicago. Some of these respondents I recognized through my interviews, others I recognized through attending SWOP trainings, while others I recognized from my prior involvement in social services in Chicago. While most of the attendees were not part of organizations that advocating for sex workers, they were providing services to a vulnerable subset of that population. There were simultaneous discussion on how trauma was the root cause of sex work, how conservative religious organizations, “who do not even know the term LGBTQ” could be useful allies in the fight against sex trafficking, how all purchasers of sexual services were exploiters, “including those in the LGBTQ community” and how Backpage was the core cause of sex trafficking among minors. At the same time, there was an acknowledgement on how we should stop funding the criminal justice system to deal with these issues, how decriminalization of sex work may help minors, how unionization may help adult sex workers, and how we need to address the root causes of how people enter the sex trade: poverty, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, addiction, mental health issues, community norms. While there was no conclusion on the merits of abolition vs. decriminalization, it was apparent that all attendees of this event were working within the parameters of this debate, and were influenced (either positively or negatively) by either abolitionist, or decriminalization discourse.

With this event, there was an opportunity to bring individuals and organizations from disparate social service, social justice, and policy advocacy worlds together for a mutual issue of

concern: that of sex trafficking among youth. These individuals and organizations constitute part of what is termed the “Strategic Action Field” of sex work and sex trafficking in Chicago. In this chapter, I interrogate Fligstein and McAdam’s Strategic Action Field (SAFs) theory to understand how incumbent organizations (End Demand) and challenger organizations (SWOP-Chicago) are structuring the field of sex work and sex trafficking in which they are embedded. I show how these organizational and coalitional actors are seeking to reshape, reinforce and transmit cultural norms across the human service field in the city of Chicago, with a larger goal of influencing policy-makers to adopt their ideas for working with individuals in the sex trade. In this sense, End Demand, as the incumbent, is trying to maintain the stability of the field (after having successfully altered their field in their preferred image), while SWOP-Chicago, as the challenger, is trying to change it. These groups infrequently interact with each other, but are cognizant of the rules and norms that constitute the field—they learn from the actions of the other and adjust their strategic actions to address issues that they perceive to be important to the field (Özen and Özen, 2011). Also within this field are human service nonprofits that serve as governance units (Fligstein and McAdam, 2011), as they are “charged with overseeing compliance with field rules” (p. 6).

For SWOP-Chicago, a group that initially operated independently with little institutional support, the recognition that forming collaborations would benefit the organization is new. When formed in 2006, SWOP was a peer-support group operating independently on its own terms—while they collaborated a small amount with other social justice oriented grassroots organizations, the organization was largely absent from the human service field in Chicago. It has been relatively recently that human service nonprofits (HSNPs) have been aware of SWOP’s existence, but this recognition has increased in the past couple of years. In contrast, the End Demand

coalition built a strong alliance of HSNPs, government officials, religious groups, and advocacy organizations from its inception in 2009. SWOP-Chicago has been trying to reshape the field by forming “an alternative vision of the field and their position in it” (Fligstein and McAdam, 2011, p. 6), but through the knowledge gleaned from their position in the SAF are seeking to do so through similar methods of End Demand—specifically collaboration with human service nonprofits that are serving as governance units in this contentious struggle around how to address the needs of sex workers. While the formation of these collaborations appear to align with the neo-institutionalist emphasis on isomorphism, I argue that recent events within the field of sex work and sex trafficking, specifically the rise of harm reduction and advocacy of large international organizations around decriminalization, have created a “crisis” which SWOP-Chicago has been able to utilize to their (slight) advantage. While Fligstein and McAdam claim that “most of the time challengers can be expected to conform to the prevailing order” (p. 6), in this case, SWOP-Chicago has been a constant thorn in the side of incumbents, who are dismayed at the possibility that sex work could be completely decriminalized. Until recently, however, they have remained in the background in the SAF as a fringe organization with radical ideas around sex work. That is, until exogenous shocks—including support for decriminalization by influential human rights organizations and the acceptance of harm reduction logics—have allowed them to disseminate their ideas to disparate audiences.

I start this chapter by making the case that in Chicago, advocacy and service organizations working with sex workers constitute an SAF with distinct incumbents and challengers. I then detail both SWOP-Chicago and End Demand proponents as separate agents within these strategic action fields, which has implications for how advocacy and services on behalf of sex workers are conducted. Both groups consider themselves to be challengers within

this institutional framework: the End Demand coalition challenges the existence of the sex trade, while SWOP-Chicago challenges the End Demand coalition's assumption that all sex work is harmful. Both groups agree that the prevalent "sex worker as criminal" discourse is extremely problematic. Yet there is a distinct contrast between SWOP-Chicago and End Demand and their roles within the strategic action field. The End Demand coalition represents the challenger in the public imagination, presenting a purportedly viable alternative to the visibly crueler carceral system that has been (and in many cases, still is) used to address prostitution. Sociologist Howard Lune (2015) refers to these organizations as "incumbent-challengers". However, End Demand policies have been successfully implemented, and they are strongly supported by the criminal justice systems they are trying to influence. So in a sense, they are less a challenger than an established incumbent, albeit one that provides some criticism of current criminal justice systems. These "incumbent-critics" are working within established systems, such as law enforcement and local/state government, to effect change within the field. In contrast, SWOP-Chicago is the "challenger" which seeks to dismantle the power of the "incumbent-critic" through engaging human service nonprofits in collaboration. While collaboration with HSNPs may be viewed as working within established systems of power, they are simultaneously seeking to break down institutions and systems that seek to keep sex workers and their clients criminalized.

Both the incumbent-critic and the challenger, through a variety of insider and outsider tactics, seek to change the direction of politics around sex work. Both groups target their tactics on HSNPs, whom they perceive as crucial allies in promoting their policies surrounding sex work, considering HSNPs role in direct services with individuals involved in the sex trade. In this chapter, I ask: 1) how are these incumbents and challengers promoting their policies within



the SAF, and creating alignment on issues affecting sex workers and 2) What have been the strategic actions through which they have been able to mobilize organizational actors to coalesce around particular policy solutions? The findings in this chapter contribute both to an empirical understanding of strategic action field theory, as well as a better understanding of what is happening in this complex field in a specific context.

### **Sex Work and Sex Trafficking as a Strategic Action Field**

Strategic Action Fields (SAF) are spaces where actors interact with each other with a shared understanding of the purposes, rules and norms of the field. They are “socially constructed arenas within which actors with varying resources vie for advantage” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 4) that are constantly shifting depending on the current status of the field situation, and the issues within the field that are currently being discussed. SAFs help make sense of how actors within organizations interact with one another, serving to maintain the status quo, or finding opportunities for change in the field (Pettinicchio, 2013). Fligstein and McAdam note four characteristics of SAFs: 1. A fluid and common understanding of the conceptions of the field by SAF actors 2. Sets of actors with more power in the field (incumbents) and those with less power in the field (challengers) 3. Set of shared understandings about rules in the field that guide interaction and 4. Strategic frames through which actors try to make sense of what others are accomplishing based on their position in the field. I use the concept of SAFs to analyze the components of the field of sex work and sex trafficking in Chicago.

Within a SAF, collective action by organizational or individual actors can take a multitude of forms. SAFs allow for a more explicit discussion of conflict and change than neo-institutionalism. As Fligstein and McAdam note: “there is constant jockeying going on in fields as a result of their contentious nature” (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 5). There are often exogenous or endogenous shocks that may reconfigure the SAF, leading to changes in actors’

perceived or actual influence in the field (Pettinicchio, 2013). Actors within an SAF react in particular ways to the constraints and positions that they are under. The actions of SAF actors can lead to the maintenance of the status quo, but can also lead to a reconfiguration of the current field. Generally speaking, the model relies on a representation of strategic action as the manifestation of social skills that lead to cooperation (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). Skilled entrepreneurs within an SAF attempt to use these social skills in order to promote their issues among potential allies (Benford & Snow, 2000; Fligstein & McAdam, 2011; Lune, 2015). With the SAF of sex work and sex trafficking in Chicago, there is significant competition as to which side, abolitionism or decriminalization, will take hold among those organizations that are tasked to provide services to individuals involved in the sex trade.

Actors within SAFs are of three major types: incumbents (actors who have largely shaped the field as it currently exists, and which generally have the most resources and power with the institutional field), challengers (actors that are less powerful, and who posit an alternative conception of the field), and governance units (units internal to the field that oversee the field's rules and ensure the proper functioning of the system). As mentioned above, the incumbent is the End Demand Coalition, and the challengers are SWOP-Chicago and their allies. However, they both are critical of the current criminal justice system, which continues to consider sex workers as criminals. Yet, the criminal justice system is being increasingly influenced by End Demand's victim-based (as opposed to criminal-based) approach, which gives End Demand more of a "critic" orientation, rather than a challenger one.

While abolitionists such as the End Demand coalition work within the criminal justice system to address issues of trafficking, they are trying to reshape this field in ways that they perceive as being indicative of social change. As End Demand proponents repeatedly conveyed

to me, their goal is to reduce the involvement that prostituted women have within the retributive criminal justice system. Thus, they do provide a critical voice within the SAF that seeks to change the way in which the sex trade is conceptualized. In Chicago, the End Demand coalition has come to represent the entire field of sex trafficking, and is considered a new and humane way to fight the problem of human trafficking that does not increase the exploitation of individuals in the sex trade (Moore, 2013a). This coalition has had significant success in their lobbying efforts (see Chapter 1 for a list of laws they have successfully lobbied to pass), and although they have been challenging the criminal justice system, they can still be defined as an “incumbent” as they have “dominated the agenda setting of the challenger field” (Lune, 2015, p. 8). News media in Chicago have cited End Demand policies when discussing new options affecting individuals in the sex trade, changes to how law enforcement has dealt with prostitution, and even decriminalization of prostitution (Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, 2014; Moore, 2013a; Morris, 2013).

The framework of SAFs allows for exogenous shocks to the field to reconfigure the dominance of the incumbent (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011; Lune, 2015). Nationally and internationally, during the past several years understandings of the meaning of sex work has begun to shift, particularly in progressive circles. Many media outlets are using the term sex worker and starting to center sex worker voices (Bazelon, 2016; Konczal, 2014; Massey, 2014). Anti-trafficking organizations and coalitions have been accused of exaggerating or even falsifying stories (Galusca, 2012; Marks, 2014; Pollitt, 2014), privileging systems of arrest, surveillance and/or carceral activism (Bernstein, 2010; Dewey & St. Germain, 2016; Graham, 2015; Musto, 2016; Shih, 2016) and exploiting clients in their organizations (Blum, 2016). Well-known international human rights groups such as the World Health Organization (WHO), The

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and Amnesty International (AI) have promoted decriminalization “based on evidence that criminalization makes sex workers less safe, by preventing them from securing police protection and providing impunity to abusers” (Amnesty International, 2016). These groups have acknowledged that their work with sex workers have shaped their viewpoints into privileging the solution of decriminalization, which may seem antithetical within the field of sex trafficking as it currently exists. Additionally, the service logic of harm reduction, as discussed throughout this dissertation, has also provided a “shock” to this field in particular ways, specifically the recent focus on how harm reduction service methods are applied to working with sex workers, and the increased participation of sex worker groups in harm reduction conferences and events (Koyama, 2012; Ray, 2010).

The boundaries in this field have shifted slightly: there is an acknowledgement that decriminalization may be an appropriate action to address the issue of sex work. Indeed, SAF theory states that SAFs do not have fixed boundaries, but shift depending upon the issues at stake (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p. 4). Actors within SAFs, even if they occupy a less privileged space within the SAF, have the ability to change the field to fit their notions of what the field should look like. The ability to change the field depends on two things: 1) the preexisting condition of the field, or how the challengers are currently situated within the field’s discourse and 2) the challenger organization’s relationships with other actors in the field. In Chicago, abolitionist and decriminalization advocates have been present in the SAF for a decade, with abolitionists strongly dominating the field of sex work and sex trafficking. The dominant position of the abolitionist groups has made it difficult for decriminalization advocates to get their ideas on the policy agenda. However, the shift in the field of sex work nationally and

internationally, combined with the collaborations between decriminalization advocates (namely SWOP) and human service nonprofits in Chicago are starting to reconfigure the SAF of sex work and sex trafficking in this city.

### ***The Role of Human Service Nonprofits as Governance Units in The SAF***

The role of governance units, according to Fligstein and McAdam (2011) are as follows:

“[governance units] are charged with overseeing compliance with field rules and, in general, facilitating the overall smooth functioning of the system...nearly all such governance units bear the imprint of the influence of the most powerful incumbents in the field and the logics that are used to justify that dominance... they are generally there not to serve as neutral arbiters of conflicts between incumbents and challengers, but to reinforce the dominant logic, and safeguard the interests of the incumbents.”

Governance units can be things such as trade unions, NGOs, media and professional associations (Fligstein and McAdam, 2011) or even meeting areas for social movements (Haug, 2013). Here, I assert that human service nonprofits are a part of this category of governance units, albeit an unorthodox one. For one, human service nonprofits are tasked with providing services to this population and thus play a crucial role in institutionalization of particular field-level rules. Being that both the incumbents and the challengers in this context are working to influence how services are provided, human service nonprofits are simultaneously sites of contestation, but also sites of possible support. Second, while advocacy organizations are in charge of taking the lead in formulating possible solutions to issues surrounding sex work and sex trafficking, human service nonprofits are actually implementing these strategies on the front-lines, and are crucial in determining what types of services and solutions are actually effective. In a sense, they are the gatekeepers for how policies are working in practice.

Governance units are an under-researched aspect of SAFs (for an exception, see Muzio, Kipping and Kirkpatrick (2016) and their work on governance units in the case of UK

management consulting). This chapter, as well as the dissertation as a whole, seeks to bring these units into the analysis of the SAF. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) argue that these governance units are essentially passive organizations that are subservient to the incumbent's wishes—they are not neutral and they do not pursue their own agenda within the field. However, I find that this view of governance units may be inaccurate, and there are cases where they may be more agentic than initially theorized. Moreover, Fligstein and McAdam's conception of the governance unit places them in a very specific and limited position, and lumps many different organizations or groups into a single category that is assumed to lean towards conservatism, and prefer to maintain of the status quo. This may not always be the case, as I will show.

### ***External and Sociopolitical Constraints in the SAF***

Before I discuss the field in Chicago, it is important to reflect upon the external and sociopolitical constraints as they exist in the SAF. Proponents of decriminalization have an uphill climb, considering the national history of policing sex and the sex trade. Although the US places most of its policing powers within the state governments, it has been the federal government that has set guidelines around considerations of prostitution (Stetson, 2004). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Mann Act was passed in 1910. This act prohibited transporting women across state lines for “immoral” purposes, and remains on the books in gender-neutral form today, referring specifically to transporting people for purposes of prostitution. In 1919, Congress passed the Standard Vice Repression Act, which effectively criminalized prostitution (DeCou, 1998; Stetson, 2004); states then followed suit in penalizing prostitution. By 1925, every state in the country had enacted a law prohibiting prostitution (Drexler, 1996). Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the 1960s and 1970s, courts began to liberalize laws concerning sexuality, including birth control, abortion and sodomy (Drexler, 1996; Hobson, 1987). However, prostitution remained

criminalized, and by 1971, with the exception of thirteen rural counties in Nevada, prostitution was completely illegal in the US. Today, the US is one of the only industrialized countries with full criminalization for prostitution.

Interestingly, according to Stetson (2004), there have been few debates around prostitution in the US in the past 50 years—instead, the debates have focused on issues of trafficking, abuse and exploitation, which have produced changes in policies relating to trafficking and exploitation for the purposes of prostitution: but not prostitution specifically. Although there was some discussion of decriminalization in 1970s by the sex worker rights organization COYOTE (mentioned in Chapter 2), this gave way to Stetson provides descriptions of three debates around exploitation and trafficking: the sexual exploitation of children in the 1970s; anti-pornography ordinances of the 1980s; and trafficking in women and children in the 1990s. In each of these debates, feminists working to end trafficking and pornography collaborated with politicians and activists on the right in order to achieve justice for exploited minors and sex trafficking victims. Prostitution was promoted as a form of trafficking, and a source of abuse through these debates—consequently, politicians on both the left and the right were left with no choice but to denounce prostitution. In all of these cases, anti-trafficking feminists pushed strongly for increased penalties on traffickers and johns, as well as supportive services for victims. In their advocacy, there was minimal challenge to the already existing criminalization of prostitution as it exists. Decriminalization, however, would result in a fundamental restructuring of the criminal justice system, and a reconfiguration of how sex work would be regulated, if at all. The creation of decriminalization policies would require far more political and legislative change than policies that “end demand”, which provide little challenge to the system as it currently stands.

## **End Demand Illinois as Incumbent-Critics in the Field of Sex Work and Sex Trafficking: Building on Existing Institutions**

In this section, I discuss End Demand Illinois as an incumbent within this field and how their policy solutions regarding the sex trade became institutionalized into state and local law. Through the use of human rights oriented discourse, effective mobilization of resources, and a favorable cultural environment, the End Demand Coalition was successful in implementing their version of how human services, law enforcement and politicians should treat sex workers in Chicago. While they have not completely decriminalized prostitution for the seller, they have been able to slightly improve their conditions. Currently, they are continuing their work advocating on behalf of their target population, trying to come up with solutions to reduce the prosecution of prostituted persons, as well as trying to increase services for this population.

### ***Problem to be Solved by End Demand: Harsh Penalties of Prostituted Women***

Rapid gentrification of near northwest side neighborhoods in Chicago during the 1990s<sup>24</sup> resulted in the introduction of new middle and upper middle class residents to these areas. Historically, these neighborhoods have had high levels of visible and street-based prostitution, with North Avenue in the Wicker Park neighborhood being one of the most well known strolls. New residents of these neighborhoods turned to the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS)<sup>25</sup> meetings to complain about the presence of prostitution in their neighborhoods (Scott & Lovell, 2010). As a strategy to address prostitution, community members organized “positive loitering” campaigns, consisting of residents and law enforcement hanging out in public spaces where there have been known crimes or safety concerns. In addition to the positive loitering

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<sup>24</sup> For well researched accounts of gentrification in the near northwest side of Chicago during this time see Lloyd (2006), Perez (2002), and Papachristos, Smith, Scherer, and Fugiero (2011).

<sup>25</sup> The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) is an attempt to blend both traditional and alternative policing strategies in order to address high crime areas. It consists of a series of meetings between police officers, policy makers, and community members to come together to prioritize how to address crime and formulate preventative solutions.



efforts, residents of these neighborhoods, along with law enforcement advocated for harsher punishment of those persons arrested for prostitution to reduce its prevalence (Scott & Lovell, 2010).

The advocacy of lay citizens and law enforcement to increase penalties on prostitution and solicitation was successful. In 2000, Public Acts 91-274 and 91-498 became effective, which had two major changes in prostitution law: 1) prostitution and all related charges (solicitation, patronizing a prostitute, pimping) became Class 4 felonies on the second conviction<sup>26</sup> and 2) any prostitution offenses that took place within 1000 feet of any property comprising a school were considered a Class 4 felony, even on the first offense. As of 2013, Illinois was one of only eight states that still had felony prostitution on the books (Moore, 2013b).<sup>27</sup> The harsher penalties were more likely to affect prostitutes (typically female) considering that they were arrested far more than clients or pimps (typically male). Additionally, law enforcement resources focused disproportionately on women who worked in the open, or street-based market of prostitution, who were less likely to have access to financial, social, or legal resources.

This increased awareness of prostitution and the harsh punishment of prostitutes led to a group of nonprofit advocacy and service organizations and former prostitutes expressing concern about how prostitution may negatively affect women. This group of individuals and organizations asserted that prostitution is a violation of human rights and a form of exploitation, and disagreed with Illinois' and Chicago's approach to prostitution in arresting individual sex workers. These organizations, including DePaul University, the Chicago Coalition for the

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<sup>26</sup> In 1961, prostitution was made a felony in Illinois after the third conviction.

<sup>27</sup> Texas, Michigan, Indiana, Idaho, Florida, Missouri and Arizona are the other states that still have felony prostitution on the books. All consider prostitution a felony after multiple offenses. Texas briefly considered getting rid of felony prostitution in May 2013, but the bill never left the committee.

Homeless (CCH), among others, began to research prostitution under the guidance of a now defunct research organization called the Center for Impact Research. Together, they collaborated on reports on prostitution which included “The Prostitution of Women and Girls in Metropolitan Chicago: A Preliminary Prevalence Report” (O’Leary & Howard, 2001), and “Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago”, (Raphael & Shapiro, 2002). These reports argued that prostitution had a significantly negative effect on women who were involved in the sex trade.<sup>28</sup> One study that surveyed women arrested for prostitution charges in Cook County jail found that “a significant percentage of them reported that they would be homeless upon release” (Personal Communication with End Demand Member, October 23, 2015). The results of these reports spurred the creation of an Intersystem Assessment (ISA) Work Group (which included the Mayor’s Office on Domestic Violence) in 2003 to “track and study Chicago’s current response to prostitution” (Sweet, 2006, p. 1). After a three-year study of the sex trade, the ISA produced a report based on their findings, which came to the conclusion that women in the sex trade should not be involved in the criminal justice system. As one member of End Demand Illinois cogently explained in an interview:

“...we repeatedly were sharing the message that these are victims of human trafficking in need of services. They’re not criminals, you know. They’re not the people that need to be persecuted, they don’t need this barrier, like this isn’t the right response and just explaining all of the issues that are involved that would make someone be prostituted, and explaining to people that it’s not, someone didn’t choose to be that or to experience that. It was mental illness, substance abuse, violence and a situation that couldn’t be overcome.”

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<sup>28</sup> Several respondents I spoke to have critiqued these studies, indicating that their methodologies were highly flawed. Some scholars, including Weitzer (2010) and Berger (2012) have also critiqued the methodologies in these studies.

This respondent emphasized the need to *not* treat victims as criminals, and instead wanted to provide them with services so that they can get out of the sex trade. Yet the provision of these services, as End Demand supporters provided is tied directly to the punishment (and subsequent fining) of purchasers of sexual services.

### ***Early Recommendations and Increased Focus on Purchasers of Sexual Services***

Following these reports, ISA made three major recommendations to politicians, service providers and law enforcement that shaped local Chicago policy on prostitution: 1) Reducing the demand side of Chicago's sex trade 2) Improving supportive services and increasing options for individuals involved in the sex trade and 3) Enhancing awareness training and accountability among systems that are involved in responding to the sex trade (Sweet, 2006, pp. 1-2). To address the first recommendation, organizations including CCH and the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) began conducting research on the sociological and psychological aspects of johns, publishing reports which include "Buying Sex: A Survey of Men in Chicago" (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 2004) and "Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex" (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). These reports concluded that: 1) men who purchase sex are from every income group, race, and religion 2) men who purchase sex are not aware of the plight of prostituted persons 3) male access to women in the sex trade is expected 4) most sexual exchanges happen indoors, not on the street and 5) if punishment was harsher for johns, men would purchase sex less (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 2004; Durchslag and Goswami, 2008). These reports put forth the idea that prostitution has been normalized to the benefit of men who purchase sex: it simultaneously made note of the fact that johns were men who you may pass on the street every day, while exclaiming the lack of knowledge of the plight of women in prostitution among johns.

Simply put, these reports shifted the blame from women (or sellers) to the men (or buyers), and also claimed that prostitution was not a victimless crime, but one that disproportionately harmed female victims.

Together, these reports have fostered an institutional environment in Chicago that has allowed the idea of decreasing the demand side through increased punishment of johns to take hold. A focus on increased punishment of johns falls in line with contemporary discussions of what Elizabeth Bernstein (2010) termed “carceral feminism”, efforts to increase criminal justice responses to sex work and sex trafficking spearheaded by feminist organizations. By focusing on current criminal justice approaches to address prostitution, these reports concluded that Chicago could use the current criminal justice system it has in place, with a focus on a new population of clients and pimps. Their challenge to current status quo solutions to prostitution (i.e., treating the sex worker as a criminal, while leaving the client unpunished) is tempered by their willingness to work with law enforcement.

The research of these organizations persuaded high-level policy makers to pay attention to a possible shift in enforcement mechanisms of prostitution. Starting in 2005, Mayor Richard Daley instituted a variety of programs that focused on the demand side of transactional sexual activities, including “John Schools”<sup>29</sup>, a website to display the photos of customers caught soliciting,<sup>30</sup> and a public awareness campaign to make customers aware of the penalties that they may encounter if caught soliciting (Scott & Lovell, 2010). Stemming from the increased focus on

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<sup>29</sup> “John Schools” are programs that are instituted for the purpose of educating men who are arrested for purchasing sexual services. There are a variety of different types of John’s schools: some are diversion programs, some are conditions of a sentence, some result in dismissed charges, some are one day classes, some consist of multiple classes. They are currently located in 50 cities across the US (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, & Hunt, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Some End Demand members have noted that they disagree with publishing photos of arrested customers (many of whom have not been convicted), but there has not been a lot of advocacy conducted against this process.

the demand side of prostitution, a coalition of individuals and organizations, including social service agencies, religious organizations, former prostitutes, law enforcement and government actors came together to create the End Demand Illinois Campaign, which sought to shift the criminal justice system to punish “johns” and pimps instead of prostitutes. In turn, more resources would be dedicated to helping women and girls currently in or at risk of prostitution. Through the End Demand campaign, End Demand Illinois and their partners created new norms around the treatment of sex workers in Chicago and Illinois, which changed the conception of who deserved retribution within the sex trade (Personal Communication with End Demand Member, January 14, 2016). In addition to successfully lobbying for multiple laws affecting prostitution victims, End Demand provides resources for attorneys representing individuals in the sex trade, and advocates for services for survivors, seeking to create a statewide system of supportive services for survivors of prostitution and trafficking (End Demand Illinois, 2015).

### ***Convergence of Criminal Justice and Human Service Narratives of Trafficking***

The criminal justice system and human services often have divergent goals, as the “criminal justice system is designed to identify and punish offenders” (Farrell & Fahy, 2009, p. 624) while human services seek to assist individuals and provide rehabilitative services. Jennifer Musto (2016) complicates the above argument, showing that in recent years, collaboration between the criminal justice system and human services for purposes of responding to human trafficking (specifically sex trafficking) have converged these goals, where individuals designated as trafficking victims may be arrested in order to receive these services. Musto’s work, which was conducted in southern California, discusses an intense process of collaboration between the criminal justice system (state actors) and human service nonprofit organizations (non-state actors) on the issue of sex trafficking. She refers to alliances among human service organizations and law enforcement to rescue individuals from the sex trade as “carceral

protectionism” (Musto, 2010, 2016), noting that “sometimes those pushing for carceral interventions are nonstate actors, rather than individual law-enforcement agents or their agencies” (Musto, 2016, p. 31).

Similarly, Dewey and St. Germain (2016) call the coalition between the criminal justice system and social services “the criminal justice-social services alliance”, which is a “punitive-therapeutic confederation of federal, state and municipal law enforcement agencies and state, municipal or independent nonprofit social service entities” (p. 3). Members of these types of alliances consider sex work to be harmful, require sex work involved women to go through a form of sociolegal intervention, and believes that progress is made only when women end their involvement in prostitution, express readiness to change, and obey the rules that are put forth by agency professionals (p. 3). Like Musto, Dewey and St. Germain note the existence of a distinct apparatus of a collaborative criminal justice and social service system that purports to rescue sex workers through a criminal justice lens.

Echoing the conclusion of Musto and Dewey and St. Germain, in Chicago the goals of many state and nonstate actors on the issue of trafficking have merged together to create new institutions around sex trafficking. Members of End Demand Illinois have successfully created a formal structure through which different actors have come together to work on issues of human (specifically sex) trafficking. My respondents involved with End Demand (either on the advocacy side, or the human service side) mentioned that a variety of task forces had been created in Chicago that have sought to share information between the sheriff’s office, local law enforcement agents, advocacy organizations, religious groups, and nonprofit human service organizations. This understanding between human service nonprofits and law enforcement led to two major changes in responses to prostitution: 1) the creation of the Women in Need of Gender

Specific Services (WINGS) court, a court designed to help longtime prostitutes leave the streets and 2) a focus on punishing pimps and clients, as well as the “third party” of owners of websites where sex workers advertise.

### ***Institutional Change in Responses to Prostitution: WINGS and Prostitution Courts***

In 2009, members of CCH began to have conversations with Judge Paul B. Biebel from the Cook County Criminal Courts in order to discuss the possibility of a problem-solving court that specialized in prostitution arrests (Mueller, 2012, p. iii). According to a report put out by CCH, “Incarceration has never solved the problems of the sex trade” and it was a “re-traumatizing experience that did nothing to help them once they were released back into the community...when released not only are the underlying problems still present, and the pimps and johns still waiting for them back on the corner, now a criminal record also follows them for the rest of their lives” (Mueller, 2012, p. iii). Thus, a new solution to prostitution was needed. The solution came in the form of a Prostitution Diversion Program (PDP).<sup>31</sup> This Cook County-based PDP, called the WINGS<sup>32</sup> court, was created in order to provide an alternative to incarceration for women that were arrested for prostitution offenses. In Illinois, prostitution offenses were easily upgradable to a felony and recidivism rates were high (Mueller, 2012); the exceedingly negative connotations that policy makers and the general public had around prostitution complicated institutional change around this issue. Thus, unlike other cities that had already

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<sup>31</sup> This PDP was modeled after other problem solving courts in the country, particularly drug and mental health courts. These courts “divert” individuals convicted of low-level drug crimes, and other minor crimes into services and treatment, instead of incarceration. The first drug court was founded in Miami, Florida in 1989 (National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 2016). While some of these programs included prostitution-related offenses, the institutional of prostitution diversion programs is relatively recent. The longest running PDP is in Phoenix, which started in 1997, and became permanent in 2001. The longest running diversion programs that also include treatment are PRIDE court in Allegheny County in Pennsylvania, and the Queens County Criminal Court in NYC, both starting in 2004 (Mueller, 2012)

<sup>32</sup> WINGS stands for Women in Need of Gender Specific Services.

instituted prostitution courts, organizations in Illinois and Chicago, had more challenges when changing public perception around prostitution, and the persons involved in prostitution.

As gleaned from interviews with End Demand members, and documents published by End Demand organizations, evidence shows that these organizational actors sought to create new institutions within existing ones, building upon the expertise of judges and law enforcement instead of seeking to overhaul the criminal justice system. In addition to CCH and Judge Biebel, other stakeholders within End Demand included the Cook County State Attorney's Office, Cook County Sheriff's Department of Women's Justice Services, Cook County Adult Probation, the Cook County Public Defender, the Cook County Commissioner, Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities, the Chicago Police Department, rape crisis advocates, and other social service providers (Mueller, 2012, p. 41). The collaboration among these varying groups revamped the way in which many law enforcement viewed social services, as one of my respondents, a member of End Demand, informed me:

“When we [social service providers] first went in the prostitution courts it was very much like social services, it's hokey pokey and you guys are just giving people chance after chance that can't be successful...And so we really got to see, particularly Judge Higgins, she was really pivotal in changing that [conception of social services], the environment and the nature of that, and really letting it be a collaborative nature for social services”

Here, the respondent describes how a particular judge was crucial in changing the environment in being a more palatable atmosphere for the inclusion of human service providers in the criminal justice system. As Mueller (2012, p. i) notes, through the creation of the WINGS court, advocates for women in prostitution sought to “[improve] the response of the existing court system, rather than its complete overhaul.” Women eligible for the WINGS court were women charged with felony prostitution (and *must* plead guilty to all prostitution charges), and



transgender individuals were “not denied from the program” (Mueller, 2012, p. 41). In lieu of state prison, the sentence consisted of two years of intensive probation with individualized services (substance abuse treatment, supportive housing, trauma counseling, job training, mental health treatment, support groups, survivor mentorship, family law services, etc.), regular drug testing, and electronic monitoring to restrict the person’s movement. Arrested persons were supervised by POWER probation officers, a gender responsive program of Cook County Adult Probation (Mueller, 2012). Eligible participants were able to decline participation and take a state prison sentence instead.

Even by early advocates, it was acknowledged that the WINGS court had considerable problems: first and foremost its requirement that eligible participants plead guilty to a felony, a black mark that stays with them as they navigate housing and job searches. In 2013, as a result of the lobbying and advocacy efforts of End Demand Illinois, the Illinois legislature eliminated felony prostitution (Personal Communication with End Demand Member, October 23, 2015). The elimination of felony prostitution required a different criminal justice response than the WINGS court, which continued to treat women in prostitution as criminals that needed to be reprovved. In 2015, Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez, Chief Judge Anthony Evans, and the public defenders’ office established the Chicago Prostitution and Trafficking Intervention Court, a more humane alternative to the WINGS Court (and by extension, prison). Proponents of the new prostitution courts sought to treat individuals arrested for prostitution like victims, not criminals (Zumbach, 2015). Many of the more restrictive and harsh tenets of the WINGS court are gone: participants are no longer required to go through drug testing or electronic monitoring, court proceedings are held at the domestic violence court (instead of the

county jail), specialized services are available to transgender persons, and charges can be dismissed upon the program's completion (Alvarez, Evans, & Campanelli, 2015).

***Strategic Actions in Response to Prostitution: Focus on Pimps, Clients, and "Third Parties"***

Members of End Demand Illinois have proven themselves formidable lobbying and policy experts on this issue in Chicago; while they have not entirely dislodged the problem of harmful treatment of prostituted women and trafficking victims, they have improved responses of the criminal justice system for prostituted women. In conjunction, End Demand members have been able to increasingly shift the blame of the sex trade issue to clients, pimps, and other third party members, which include online advertisements. End Demand Illinois has been so successful in introducing new ways of thinking about prostitution that Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart has made it a new institutionalized law enforcement practice to go after "pimps and johns" through the policing of Backpage and Craigs List (online forums where many sex workers advertise or have advertised in the past).

In 2009, Sheriff Dart attempted to sue the online retailer Craigslist, accusing the website of "promoting prostitution," referring to the website's erotic services section as "the single largest source of prostitution in the nation...missing children, runaways, abused women and women trafficked in from foreign countries are routinely forced to have sex with strangers because they're being pimped on Craigslist" (CNN, 2009). Although Craigslist was not initially found culpable for promoting prostitution, it did eventually shut down its erotic services section in 2010 due to increasing pressure from law enforcement and sex trafficking advocacy groups (Miller, 2010). End Demand advocacy organizations agree with Tom Dart's account of online advertisers, with most organizations stating that online modes for solicitation should be shut

down in order to decrease the instance of trafficking<sup>33</sup>. End Demand proponents note that they “applaud efforts to shut down Backpage.com’s escort ads” (CAASE, 2012). Beginning in 2014, Sheriff Dart has tried to force the dissolution of Craigslist’s successor Backpage by demanding that credit card companies ban the use of their cards from being used on the website. Initially, this ban was unsuccessful: the 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals proclaimed that Dart’s efforts violated Backpage’s First Amendment free speech rights, and forbade Sheriff Dart from mandating sanctions against companies that do business with Backpage (Stempel, 2015). Until recently, efforts to shut down Backpage appeared to be a losing battle for Tom Dart. However, on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Carl Ferrer, the CEO of Backpage was arrested and charged with pimping a minor, pimping and conspiracy to commit pimping after a joint investigation by the California and Texas attorneys general (Domonoske, 2016). According to several respondents I interviewed, the continued focus of law enforcement nationwide on shutting down places where sex work and sex trafficking occurs is largely credited to the efforts of Tom Dart. This is particularly true in regards to the focus on Backpage and Craigs List, as one member of End Demand Illinois noted: “Tom Dart has been a key person for shutting down Craigslist and he did get slapped in the face...And I think most people know Tom Dart, especially on this issue. And it’s a great service [what he has done].”

Concurrent with the focus on shutting down Backpage, Sheriff Dart’s office spearheaded a new initiative called the “National Johns Suppression Initiative”, an effort to “highlight the role of sex solicitors” in the sex industry (Dart, 2015; Rice and Ward, 2016). This effort started in 2011 as the “National Day of Johns Arrests”, and involved eight other law enforcement agencies

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<sup>33</sup> Not all End Demand or abolitionist organizations agree with this, however. One abolitionist organization, called Children of the Night, has supported Backpage, as a result of Backpage’s work with their organization and the police to identify minors involved in sex trafficking that may advertise on their website.

that conducted sting activities in hotels, brothels, on the street, and via online advertising (Dart, 2011). In the press release, Dart's office noted: "Public awareness around the operation was made possible by a grant from Demand Abolition, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund.

Demand Abolition supports the movement to end modern-day slavery by combating the demand for illegal commercial sex in the United States" (Dart, 2011, p. 1). Some End Demand members are also members of Demand Abolition, a multi-year and multi-stakeholder national strategy that is working to combat the demand for purchased sex. Demand Abolition has noted that Tom Dart's work has assisted Demand Abolition in accomplishing one of their major goals: "Enabling implementation of proven and promising practices, policies, and programs for combating demand at the local, state, and national levels, specifically within the criminal justice system" (Demand Abolition, 2017a). Demand Abolition notes that their work with the National Johns Suppression Initiative has ultimately solidified this goal, constituting a major success for their coalition, and in conjunction, the End Demand coalition in Chicago.

With these client arrests, moreover, come one of the cornerstones of End Demand policies: starting in 2014, sixty percent of the fines from arrested clients (including car impoundment and towing fees) started going to rehabilitation programs provided by the Department of Women's Justice Services, with the other forty percent going to girls in juvenile justice programs (Office of the Cook County Sheriff, 2016). Combining criminal justice and human service approaches in this manner result in a bipartisan solution to sex trafficking that is difficult to dispute. As one End Demand Illinois member noted:

"I don't anticipate any pushback [from policy makers]...we did a lot to talk about this issue [sex trafficking] to Kirk<sup>34</sup> last year. Of course you can't see him because he does not talk to anybody but we saw his staffer, and he was certainly very supportive as was

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<sup>34</sup> Mark Kirk (R) was the junior U.S. senator from Illinois between 2010 and 2017.

Durbin<sup>35</sup>...So there is a lot of receptivity on the part of policy makers. So one of the things we are doing because of the law that was passed in 2014, I believe, was creating this fund for victim services if you are familiar with it? And so what happens is when the local municipalities make arrests and they collect the fine from a john, or a trafficker or a pimp they actually get to keep some of those funds so it really actually helps the municipalities, some of it goes to the state, some of it goes to their own community, so it helps them if they are enforcing a law that goes after johns and pimps.”

This respondent is correct: there is virtually no pushback to End Demand policies on the part of policymakers. Human service providers have expressed support for it because it provides them with additional funding—law enforcement has expressed support for it because it allows them to continue their work arresting people that they consider to be criminals. Broadly speaking, this policy also maps on neatly with the goals of “conservative” and “liberal” politicians: it satisfies the increased human service funding desired by many liberal politicians, while maintaining a focus on “law and order” often desired by conservatives.

### ***Responses to Work with Law Enforcement***

Despite this institutionalization of the cooperation between the End Demand Coalition and law enforcement on efforts to end sex work and sex trafficking, members of anti-trafficking task forces are acutely aware of the negative connotations that the law enforcement have in the city of Chicago, particularly among leftist and progressive advocacy groups (including SWOP-Chicago). Law enforcement plays a crucial role in the strategic action field of sex work and sex trafficking, often being on the frontlines when interacting with individuals involved in the sex trade. As Musto (2016, p. 28) describes, individuals in the sex trade are often targets of rescue interventions that are law-enforcement coordinated and “social service assisted”: these interventions include arrest, detention, and psychological surveillance, putting law enforcement

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<sup>35</sup> Dick Durbin (D) is the senior U.S. senator from Illinois.

at the forefront of these efforts. However, the tension between the role of human service nonprofits and the role of law enforcement has put some nonprofits in a bind, and some respond by strategically defending the work of law enforcement as individuals who are helping them with ending trafficking, while distancing themselves from them as an institution. In an informal conversation, one member of an End Demand advocacy group immediately stated that they were trying to reduce the involvement of women in prostitution in the criminal justice system. She went on to downplay their work in increasing criminal penalties on men and highlighted the primary focus of getting the women out of the sex trade, seeming to indicate that their focus on men was less important. Other members of End Demand Illinois seek to humanize law enforcement, indicating that despite preconceived negative notions of police officers, they were individuals who had the victim's best interests at heart. Illustrating this point, below is one exchange that I had with one End Demand member, who sought to defend the Chicago Police Department in the work that they did with victims of sexual exploitation (the words she used to refer to sex workers).

**Respondent:** [Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart] was very open to, he was willing to listen to folks to tell him what their life was like as a trafficked person. Very open. When he got the top job as sheriff, that just flowed, it made sense and he has a wonderful set up. He has these men, they would go out in the street and talk to somebody, but they are also tuned in enough to know that these women who have been trafficked have been hurt by men. So the trust level is not there. I have met these men.

**Interviewer:** And these men are all members of law enforcement?

**Respondent:** Yes, *but they're very non-violent*. [emphasis added during interview] They're caring, and you almost feel that without even hearing them speak, so they have been successful at getting some of these women, ready for change in their lives. And then what these people do is take them, and we never talk about address or anything like that, they take them to a place in the meantime,

and they call the women who have been trafficked who are now out of trafficking and are now working on this task force.

Upon talking to the respondent, I noticed that she strongly emphasized the kindness and “non-violence” of law enforcement, promoting them as essential characters in the efforts to help women and girls involved in sex trafficking. Indeed, Tom Dart is considered to be a progressive sheriff. He has advocated for, among other things: elimination of cash bond and removing low-level offenders from the prison system. On a recent episode of 60 Minutes, Dart was said to have sounded “less like an incarcerator than a defense attorney” (Stahl, May 21, 2017) and some correctional officers actually consider him to be too soft on crime. This reputation of Dart squares with the efforts of End Demand members to showcase their support of women and girls involved in prostitution. Thus, among End Demand members, the deflection of the negativity and emphasis on the positives of law enforcement is common. Here, the respondent is aware of common perceptions of law enforcement as perhaps being “violent”, or at the very least not “caring”. Yet throughout the interview, she conveyed to me that the common stereotypes of police officers were unfortunate, and incorrect, as she saw them as crucial components to the End Demand fight against sex trafficking.

While End Demand members view themselves as activists, working towards social change for individuals in the sex trade, they are critical of activists that they feel are working against the system. Some have critiqued anti-police activists, including those that have advocated against State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez (now former). In 2016, Anita Alvarez was under constant attack by activists on the left (including SWOP-Chicago) due to her role in the Laquan McDonald case.<sup>36</sup> However, the Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force was one of

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<sup>36</sup> In October 2014, Laquan McDonald, a unarmed black teenager was shot 16 times as the incident was taped by a police dash cam video. The officer who shot McDonald, Jason Van Dyke,

Alvarez's pet projects, and she has been cited as an effective leader in the field of sex trafficking.

A respondent from a drop in center working with the task force points out the good Alvarez has done:

“Without the Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force [our organization] would not be going on. We also know who in the current office has been working on human trafficking issues. We understand a lot more, probably more than the general public, what they have had to deal with, and the legislation and all rules and regulations are there and that are imposed on their office before they can even bring a case up. And I mean, they have had cases that you know, go on for years and years, and...you know there were gang members that were arrested back in 2011-12 for trafficking and their cases are still going on.”

This respondent emphasized the complexities inherent in pursuing a case with the Human Trafficking Task Force, and how the negative reputation of Anita Alvarez deemphasizes the positive work that she has done for trafficking victims, which often goes unnoticed and unappreciated by anti-police and anti-criminal justice activists. She goes on to note that she recognizes the harsh criticisms of law enforcement and politicians that have become inherent to many of the organizations in the anti-violence field, which she considers her organization, one that works on issues of gender based violence, to be a part of. However, she feels that these criticisms are strongly unfair and unwarranted. When attending an anti-violence conference on the North Side of Chicago, she said she became extremely upset at the harsh criticism posed on Ms. Alvarez by conference organizers:

“Yeah, I am, I'm not gonna lie I wanted to walk out. I didn't realize that was what I was walking into for that event... I was

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was charged with murder over a year after the shooting when the videotape was released to the public. As the State's Attorney, Anita Alvarez was accused of covering up the incident, and having unusually close ties to the police. According to activists and critics, she did not treat the case fairly nor in a timely matter. Her faulty handling of the case was also considered to be the driving reason for her loss in the Democratic Primary for State's Attorney in 2016, losing to challenger Kim Foxx.



extremely pissed and I thought it was inappropriate for what I thought was a conference about general violence, I didn't realize there was any political thing to it.”

This respondent's summary of the event speaks to her frustration that a conference that was supposed to be about “general violence” should not be political, and at the same time directly attacked *her* politics. The conference, which I also attended, was an affair with a diverse group of around 100 participants, held at DePaul University—it was free and open to the public. I recognized quite a few faces around the room: some worked as service providers, many were activists with various social and gender justice movements. The conference began with a self-identified “queer artist” of South Asian descent who pointed us to “important information in the back” which included a “very important pamphlet” called *10 Things I Hate About Anita Alvarez*. The artist/presenter went into a brief rant about why Anita Alvarez “sucked”: she prosecuted victims of violence who defended themselves, she contributed to the increasing collaboration between domestic violence organizations and criminal prosecutors, and noted that those who were “concerned about racial justice” should be especially concerned about the work of Alvarez, and be prepared to vote her out. For someone supportive of Alvarez, the rhetoric promoted at this event would likely induce strong negative reactions, regardless of the larger goals put into place.

Yet for the respondent quoted above, despite the stark differences between her organization and others in the anti-violence field around the possibilities of collaboration within the criminal justice system, she still considers her organization as part of the harm reduction movement, the movement that seeks to reduce the harm imposed among individuals who are engaged in risky behavior. As mentioned in Chapter 1, harm reduction service logics moved toward supporting for decriminalization of sex work, and against increased criminalization of any population—including clients of sex workers. However, she recognizes that not everyone

would see their organization as a harm reduction organization going on to note that: “at the end of the day, if people are willing to work with us [against trafficking], and we definitely don’t agree with all of the organizations we partner with. But as an organization, we are at varying degrees of differences with others, and we feel that the kind of work we are doing, we can find common ground with others who may think differently”. She goes on to say that “I could see future conversations with organizations like the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP-Chicago)...and obviously we disagree *completely* [emphasis added during interview] But at the same time, if they want to use the center for any of the women we serve, great. So you know, at the end of the day, always harm reduction.”

While the above quotes from a member of End Demand Illinois may suggest that there may be an ideological convergence between anti-trafficking organizations and sex worker rights organizations, the evidence gathered from this project suggests that the pre-existing differences among these organizations are too vast to lead to any sort of collaboration in the field as it stands (however, I will point out in Chapter 6 that there are certainly respondents within HSNPs that straddle the logics of abolition and decriminalization). Although both groups are challenging pre-existing institutions, End Demand Illinois organizations are attempting to *build* on/reform current institutions such as law enforcement, while SWOP Chicago, and other sex worker rights organizations *break* with existing institutions. They seek to dismantle systems that they see as oppressive, including the criminal justice system, and abstinence oriented social services. In order to do this, however, they have found it important to find common ground with human service nonprofits, which work as implementers of the policies created to address issues of sex work.

## **SWOP as Challengers within the Field of Sex Work and Sex Trafficking: Breaking with(in) Existing Institutions**

Fields consist of incumbent and challenger actors that seek to maintain or reconfigure the field, establishing supremacy over the rules and norms within it. While I note that some organizations may establish dominance over the field (in this case, this would be the End Demand Coalition), change can occur through other actors that are not in traditionally dominant positions (i.e., challengers), as a result of leveraging resources and cultivating individual and organizational allies. As will be discussed in the next chapter, one of SWOP's recent accomplishments was to put together a comprehensive list of service providers that they refer to as Providers and Resources Offering Services to Sex Workers, or PROS. By creating this resource, it appears that SWOP is also working within existing institutions: PROS is a network of service professionals, legal, medical mental health, social service, organizations and professionals that have committed to providing nonjudgmental services to people in the sex trade. By working with members of the PROS network, and serving as a connecting point between these more established nonprofits, SWOP is in a sense legitimizing this social service system.

Yet, while the PROS network does constitute efforts to collaborate with nonprofit establishment organizations, it also allows SWOP to reframe the debate on sex work: in many of their trainings, they are able to counteract preconceived notions of sex workers to service providers, thus altering the SAF to their advantage. As one SWOP member explained, the PROS network has become a necessary resource for many human service organizations in Chicago:

The PROS network I think continues to expand and we have a lot of groups that come to us like asking for trainings, so for instance the University of Illinois at Chicago nursing program every year invites SWOP to provide training for nurses in training about how they do sort of best practices for working of sex workers. We have enough come in training at organizations like Howard Brown and the Center on Halsted, people who cater to a lot of numbers in

LGBT community, many of whom may have contact with sex work sort of, and we provide best practices for those mental health service providers. So I think that we've started to become a resource for other organizations in Chicago and we're happy that folks are trying to access us with the PROS Network.

***Problem to be Solved: Continued Involvement of the Criminal Justice System in Prostitution Services***

While SWOP, and other sex worker rights organizations agree with the End Demand Coalition that sex workers should not be punished for their involvement in sex work, members of SWOP (and the sex worker rights community as a whole) have been sharply critical of End Demand efforts to increase penalties on pimps and clients, as well as efforts to shut down spaces where sex workers advertise. As one SWOP board member informed me:

“I know for sex workers in general, we are always advocating for decriminalization of sex work, and I know that Tom Dart in general has been a major opponent of that...Dart has been against major credit card companies processing payments to Backpage, and so Backpage stopped charging...but I know that SWOP Chicago is behind that decision against Tom Dart's crusade against online advertising”.

This board member sums up the major frustrations of Sheriff Tom Dart for sex workers—he is an opponent of the decriminalization of sex work, and has been working tirelessly to cease credit card companies from doing business with Backpage. Yet Dart's reputation among End Demand proponents and policy makers as “soft on crime” and compassionate in his approach to criminal justice, has made it difficult to promote these criticisms outside the sex worker and sex worker activist community. As mentioned in the prior section on End Demand, criminalizing pimps and clients as a solution to the problem of sex trafficking has been institutionalized into policy and accepted by most policy makers, as well as many human service nonprofits. The challenge for SWOP is to problematize this solution of criminalizing clients, and indicate how

the continued involvement of the criminal justice system in any aspect of prostitution policy is not only ineffective, but specifically harmful to the population they are trying to serve.

SWOP, in its efforts to collaborate with human service nonprofits, is disputing two main ideas promoted by End Demand organizations: 1) the criminal justice system is appropriate for addressing issues stemming from sex work and 2) that sex workers are all (female) victims that are seduced in the trade by a (male) pimp. While many human service providers are unlikely to directly challenge current narratives around sex work publicly at the policy level, via legislative advocacy or protest, these organizations may do so at the micro level, via direct service provision or collaboration with SWOP. Specifically, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, many of the service agencies I spoke to critiqued the focus on the criminal justice system in working with sex workers, which is where they saw SWOP as an ally. As mentioned in Chapter 1, harm reduction, a service ideology that seeks to reduce harm incurred by risky behaviors (i.e., alcohol, drugs, sex, etc.) has been highly critical of criminal justice involvement in drug use specifically, but its larger policy proposals of decriminalization have migrated to issues of sex work. SWOP's approach to sex work, and its harm reduction oriented approach, has proven to be highly attractive to many service providers.

### ***Convergence of Harm Reduction and Anti-Criminalization Logics and Sex Workers Rights***

For a challenger organization such as SWOP-Chicago that is 'aspiring to power' (Emerson, 1962, p. 38), they are attempting to mobilize actors against the status quo of End Demand. As a result of the assiduous efforts of End Demand organizations, the status quo around issues of sex work, in this case, has shifted from prostitute as criminal to prostitute as victim. The difficulty therein lies in how to get other powerful actors (such as human service nonprofits) to break with institutions that define all sex workers as victims. As challengers, one of SWOP's major roles is to bring other individual and organizational actors to support their framing of an

issue. According to Pettinicchio (2013), “Entrepreneurs are constantly looking for opportunities, often brought on by broader institutional changes, to improve their place in the field and to ensure that their framing of the issue rules out the competition” (p. 82). In this case, the rise in harm reduction has been an “opportunity” for SWOP-Chicago, and other sex worker rights groups to contrast their framing of the issue with those of End Demand. End Demand policies, they claim, will deter sex workers from seeking services, while also exposing them to harmful arrests. So the question that remains is: if collaboration between human services and law enforcement is cited as evidence that the predominance of “arrest and rescue” methods are intact, then why is it that many human services in the city of Chicago (where End Demand policies remain supreme, and have been codified into law) appear to be questioning this approach, with some decisively aligning themselves with an organization with less money, less clout, and is breaking with the institutional norms that have until recently been held sacrosanct? Although the institutionalized response to working with sex workers is to attempt to remove them from the sex trade first and foremost, the philosophy surrounding *harm reduction*, and its subsequent institutionalization into service-oriented nonprofit organizations has provided SWOP with an opportunity to frame their approach in line with the current ideology that holds dominance in service provision.

### ***Exogenous Shock in Responses to Sex Work: Introduction of Harm Reduction Logics in Human Services***

Harm reduction has traditionally focused its efforts on the risk behaviors of drug users. The Harm Reduction Coalition (HRC), among the preeminent experts of this approach, defines harm reduction as such: “a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing *negative consequences associated with drug use*. Harm reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, *the rights of people who use drugs*” (Harm Reduction

Coalition, 2016, emphasis added). Harm reduction organizations still overwhelmingly associate the practice with drug users, although there is an increasing number who recognize that harm reduction can be applied to individuals who are in the sex trade.

As I detail further in Chapter 5, the organization of SWOP has professionalized considerably over the past several years, which has led to an increase of human service nonprofits contacting them for collaboration and trainings. SWOP's professionalization has occurred in tandem with the rise in harm reduction in Chicago, as one service provider and expert in harm reduction informed me, that "In 2004...[there] was a group of people that were practicing or interested in practicing from a harm reduction framework and disseminating that...we began to specifically work with housing providers in Chicago to move them to a Housing First Model<sup>37</sup> and that was in the context of our Continuum of Care adopting Housing First and part of our plan to end homelessness, and of course we know that harm reduction is an essential component of Housing First." She went on to discuss how a decade ago, people would walk out of trainings, as the philosophy was controversial to what they were currently practicing. However, this has shifted as more people "have at least heard of it, they are aware of it, and a lot more people are embracing and accepting of it." She also noted that some people and organizations, particularly formal treatment agencies that are slower to accept the model, have the incorrect assumption that harm reduction is "where the money is," but this perception has at least had the effect of increased acceptance.

With the recent rise in the status of harm reduction as a service logic, many service providers have responded positively to SWOP's discourse around sex work, and the way in which their ideology is directly aligned with harm reduction. According to Aldrich and Fiol

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<sup>37</sup> The Housing First Model for homelessness advocates for the provision of housing to homeless individuals without mandating sobriety.

(1994) “entrepreneurs need to disguise the truly radical nature of their new activity and the challenge it may pose to established organizations, while simultaneously making a case that they are different enough to hold a comparative advantage” (p. 652). While Aldrich and Fiol were talking largely about for-profit firms, this statement could be applied to grassroots nonprofit organizations as well. As service providers have been exposed to harm reduction practices through the dissemination and increased acceptance of harm reduction, some have been exposed to sex workers rights organizations. In Chicago, as SWOP has had to adapt to professional norms in order to gain legitimacy (more about this in the following chapter), other human service nonprofits have sought them out for increased elucidation around the use of harm reduction in working with sex workers.

SWOP has been able to capitalize on its expertise with adult sex workers among Chicago’s service providers to show how harm reduction can be applied in this case. For instance, SWOP, in its trainings with human service providers, began promoting a framework called “The Three C’s”. The Three C’s framework notes that there are three ways in which an individual can enter sex work: through “choice, circumstance, or coercion”. Choice indicates that someone is “fully consenting to the work, can leave for other employment options, but chooses to stay” (SWOP-Chicago, Harm Reduction With Individuals in the Sex Trade, p. 6). Circumstance indicates that someone is “consenting to work in the sex trade, but wants to leave. Needs to stay usually for financial reasons.” (SWOP-Chicago, Harm Reduction With Individuals in the Sex Trade, p. 6). Finally, coercion indicates that someone “is not consenting to work, being tricked for forced by another individual(s). Also called trafficking” (SWOP-Chicago, Harm Reduction With Individuals in the Sex Trade, p. 6.) Within this framework, providers need to frame their treatment of sex workers accordingly. During an informal conversation, one respondent informed



me that this framework of the three C's had completely changed their thinking on sex work, and felt that that is what they need to promote to address unbelieving or skeptical service providers, as it made sense within their framework.

SWOP's anti-abstinence stance on sex work has aligned with the fact that some service providers believe that abstinence-only practices are a set up for failure. In fact, one provider conveyed to me that even if an organization had abstinence-oriented policies, frontline staff would have difficulty abiding with them. I asked one of the providers about an organization called Genesis House (now defunct) that they used to collaborate with. Genesis House provided services to sex workers in the Chicagoland area, and was known for providing abstinence-oriented policies, and I wanted to hear more about this collaboration. Genesis House was an organization that sought to get women out of the trade, first and foremost. They were a Catholic organization that promoted "spiritual conversion and absolutism and stuff like that, through their director."<sup>38</sup> Yet their staff, according to the respondent, recognized that this was a "nasty way to be", and thus the front line staff, who were more likely to promote a "range of options" to work with sex workers, were willing to collaborate with the respondent's organization, which is among the most fervent harm reduction practitioners in Chicago. Once Genesis House closed, SWOP was able to fill a gap in providing services for sex workers (although it is important to note that members of SWOP view themselves as fundamentally distinct from Genesis House—they work to distinguish themselves from organizations that seek to remove individuals from prostitution). Indeed, similar to the respondent's organization, SWOP does assume a harm reduction oriented approach to their work with and for sex workers, and have been able to utilize

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<sup>38</sup> To illustrate Genesis House's views on sex work, their early organizational brochure states: "Where prostitution is illegal, the arrest and incarceration of the prostitute merely confirm her self-worth and expectations of abuse...legalizing prostitution does not help the prostitute, in that it confirms her idea that this is all she can do or be worth." (Sachs, 1991)

this to leverage various partnerships in Chicago, despite the fact that institutional norms around the treatment of sex workers largely go against their approach.

Upon speaking with many human service providers, most of whom had differing views on sex work, I found that it was the service logic of harm reduction that was really driving their interest in SWOP, and the reason behind why human service nonprofits were seeking out SWOP for trainings, and in some cases, collaborations. These institutional changes that have occurred within service provision in Chicago around the implementation of harm reduction provided opportunities for SWOP to reframe their approach to working with human service nonprofits. The institutionalization of harm reduction in drug use and homeless services led to a transition in their approach to working with service providers—SWOP shifted their framework from having a more empowerment based approach to sex work, to acknowledging the complicated experiences of those that engage in circumstantial or survival sex work. Human service nonprofits are more likely to work with those who are involved in survival sex work and SWOP’s ability to speak about this population has been resonating with service providers. SWOP has been contacting human service nonprofits (and in turn, has also been contacted by some nonprofits) in order to promote its mission, while providing trainings and workshops that allow it to demonstrate its mission alignment with harm reduction, as well as general human service nonprofit values.

Of course, an expansion in focus among harm reduction practitioners to include sex work did not occur immediately. Even among some harm reduction advocates, harm reduction in sex work is still a controversial issue, as one respondent, who splits her time between a mental health center and running a therapy practice notes:

“I think sex work is sort of the next wave [of harm reduction]. Because people immediately see harm reduction, I mean, the first impact of harm reduction certainly was, wow, smoking cigarettes can negatively impact you, and driving without seatbelts can

negatively impact you and people didn't see that as harm reduction at first. But it certainly is, and those are the examples I give to contrary audiences, because they're like, you're just giving information to blah blah blah to do whatever. I'm not giving any adult permission to do anything. But similarly, you don't wear your seatbelt, you go speeding, you're involving yourself in a risky sexual situation, you're making choices. And then, you know, HIV is the next round of harm reduction as I see it. Gosh, we don't want HIV to spread, what do we do? Well, we can provide condoms and syringes and testing, and now PrEP and so all sorts of things. I think this is sort of the next frontier. I think there is still certainly a stigma with most substance use, unless you smoke a little weed or drink a couple of beers, but everything else is like 'oh my god you do what now?' I think people even in the harm reduction world, I'd hate to say it are like 'sex work is over here.' ”

What this respondent, who did strongly express her support for sex workers rights, summarizes is the tendency for even harm reduction supporters to treat sex work as a separate entity from other types of risky behaviors, which has made change, if not impossible, difficult.

*Institutional Change in Responses to Prostitution: Anti-Criminalization and Focus on LGBTQ Populations*

As human service nonprofits that are seeking to legitimize themselves with the service logic of harm reduction, some are questioning what they perceive to be the criminalized approach of End Demand, and seeking out the support and collaboration of SWOP-Chicago, whose anti-criminalization approach is more in line with harm reduction practices. For some organizations that do work with End Demand, they are concerned about what will happen to vulnerable populations should they support policies that promote increased criminalization. As one legal service provider told me, the fining of johns is a controversial aspect of End Demand policies:

**Respondent:** A couple of years ago End Demand reached out to us asking if we wanted to become one of their partners...because they had been working with some organizations but they needed other partners who had a relationship with some of the women involved and so they reached out to us.

**Interviewer:** And how did you all decide to become involved in the End Demand Campaign?

**Respondent:** You know, it fits in with what we do and I don't think that's a difficult decision.

**Interviewer:** And were there any major agreements or disagreements with the policies that End Demand proposed?

**Respondent:** Well, the fining of people who—the fining of johns basically. People buying sex, that bill was a little controversial for us just because anything that creates any more criminal barriers is difficult for us to support.

Politically, the concern around individuals in the sex trade has focused on individuals who may be trafficked, leaving out other populations that may be in the trade by choice, or as a result of survival. SWOP, in its efforts to address the concerns of populations that may not be victims of sex trafficking, has provided service agencies a different framework for thinking about this population, as a manager at a homeless agency stated:

“I think that just culturally there is such a stigma attached to these things and there is less talk about it than there is for mental illness and substance use, involvement in the sex industry. Like these things carry such a stigma among the other tenants in the building....we had intentionally had SWOP do a training for all of the staff in just like really understanding like the barriers that people are facing in and how to effectively work with that population, and also like how to talk about that work.”

This respondent describes what I saw occurring during many of my interviews: respondents do not want to talk about the sex trade, even as they are willing to expound on issues such as mental illness and substance use. This lack of context for service nonprofits to discuss these issues provides some inroads for SWOP to share their expertise—even on something as knowing the appropriate language to use when referring to sex work. Other service nonprofits stated that they were concerned about the assumptions surrounding clients—namely, clients of sex workers may

also be participants in a human service nonprofit, and in need of services. As one respondent who works in HIV services informed me:

“Definitely I see a lot more people who have paid for sex, or exchanged something for sex rather than somebody like a sex worker themselves. But that’s because I largely see -- I see far more males than I do females, far more straight males... At the meal programs I think -- well I will say I’m testing a lot more males because -- and I hear this -- they like to sit down with a young lady. It happens, so I get a lot more men who just kind of like would like a female to make eye contact with them, because I think it doesn’t happen a lot.”

Fining clients of sex workers for items such as solicitation or procuring a prostitute can be detrimental for someone who may already be poor, homeless, or marginalized, the primary population with which this respondent works. The above respondent noted that she started collaborating with SWOP in order to reach more sex workers, particularly in the west side of Chicago. She noted that her organization, when working with sex workers was “very compassionate...I know that we do not weigh on whether or not someone should be doing sex work. Because that’s a big no-no, we would never do that. But sometimes I don’t know that we are like, necessarily the people—that the people doing sex work trust the most. And I think it’s a lot because of our ministry part.” In regards to the work with SWOP, she noted: “We don’t go as far as they do. And we thought it would be a great fit, because there is a chance that those may be at high risk for STI’s, and lack options for treatment.” Another service provider, who works in an employment agency, stated in regards of their response to sex work:

“Our general position is anti criminalizing things that aren’t dangerous... I can’t imagine anyone in our office being like ‘yeah, arrest people’. Yeah, you should arrest someone for doing something that does not harm anyone [states sarcastically].”

In conjunction around policies around anti-criminalization, many service providers were concerned about what increased criminalization means for the LGBTQ populations that they may

serve. Prior scholarship has shown that LGBTQ populations, including LGBTQ youth, are more likely to engage in “survival” sex, often because they have fewer options for work and survival (Dank et al., 2015; Lutnick, 2016)—policies put in place for trafficking victims often do not affect this population, and there are less resources and housing opportunities for trafficked individuals that do not identify as cisgender women or girls. The lack of resources and opportunities for transgender youth is particularly concerning for many service providers. For one manager that works at a HIV/AIDS focused organization, they stated:

“So we’re trying to build these [service] programs...we have partnered probably with about 15 organizations around the city that do, other work, with [trans women]. And not necessarily just HIV-related work. But we really want to expand that work, make sure that we have housing, employment opportunities for transgender youth. All those root causes. So when we're talking about any of this, any of these populations, we have young women who are doing sex trade work, really to survive. Survival sex...And until we build up jobs, and other opportunities and that, you know you hear so many stories over the past couple of years, of young trans women who are dying.

Suicide rates, are very high within that population. We've got to do something. It's about community, it's about people being accepting of them. So a part of our program is trying to increase awareness. All young women are young women you know. And they're a person, you know, they're human, and we want to make sure that we're supporting them, and they have access...

And part of it is because people just really don't know how to react. I've heard, really sad stories where people go to the hospital, and of course when you're there you're sick, you're unconscious, whatever, and they take off your clothes, it's one of the first things they do, and they see something different, and the staff goes crazy. So we need to train that staff, so they are more friendly, or trans friendly to that population, so people feel comfortable going in, so we have people that might not want to get services--I've had people tell me that they don't want to go somewhere, because they mistreated me and I'm scared. So they go underground, and now we have another problem. So they're getting hormones underground instead of going somewhere that's safe. And we know that they're using bad needles, and it just causes another issue... and I think some

programs are really designed around trans and some are not going to take you if they think you are part of prostitution.

This respondent has described how and why survival sex is very high among transgender individuals—they are often discriminated against when applying for employment and housing and rely on the income opportunities provided by sex work. Despite the high numbers of trans persons involved in sex work, this respondent notes that many programs will not take individuals with past or current involvement in prostitution. Including transgender individuals, particularly transgender women, in the discourse around sex work has reframed the way in which sex work is discussed, and this has provided inroads for SWOP to engage in collaborations and trainings. According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS), transgender individuals experience high levels of discrimination, poverty, homelessness, and violent interactions (Fitzgerald, Patterson, & Hickey, 2015, p. 4). The survey indicates that 10.8 percent of the participants had engaged in sex work in some form (13.1 percent of transfeminine respondents vs. 7.1 percent of transmasculine respondents) and an additional 2.3 percent indicated that they exchanged sex for rent or a place to stay. Reports have indicated that End Demand policies have had negative effects on trans persons involved in the sex trade: some transgender women arrested for solicitation in Chicago received felony charges and had their mug shots posted online as male clients (Fitzgerald et al., 2015; Lovell, 2012). Bringing the transgender population into the discourse around sex work has resulted in many human service nonprofits questioning the involvement of the criminal justice system, as well as the predominant End Demand focus on trafficking and criminalization of clients of sex workers. While this focus on the LGBTQ

population was not the result of the sole efforts of SWOP<sup>39</sup>, it provided a space for SWOP to insert their agenda into debates surrounding sex work. LGBTQ organizations reached out to SWOP (and vice versa) as they recognized that sex work was an issue that affected their population, and often was not comprehensively addressed.

One provider discussed a renewed focus of their staff around issues of gender, particularly the recent emphasis on recognizing a person's gender pronouns. The provider noted: "I think people's awareness of that [gender pronouns], that's been sort of new for many people, and newish for me, and really new for some people. And involvement of SWOP actually has been a big deal in helping people to understand how [gender and sexuality] applies to sex work and understand the difference between sex trafficking and sex work." According to SWOP members, statements like this are reflected in the increased number of trainings that they have been requested to perform.

## **Conclusion**

The SAF of sex work and sex trafficking in Chicago has undergone significant alterations over the past several decades. Changes in this field have been largely the result of strategic actions undertaken by advocacy organizations, while human service nonprofits, as governance units, are in charge of monitoring and implementing these changes. This SAF has a distinct separation between the incumbent organizations (End Demand organizations) and the challenger organization (SWOP-Chicago). As both groups are seeking to transform the status quo, I discuss the concepts of "incumbent-critic" and "challenger" to indicate the social change goals of both organizations, but also to delineate that there is one side that dominates the debate of sex work and sex trafficking.

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<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that several prominent transgender celebrities, including Janet Mock and Laverne Cox, have come out strongly in support of sex worker rights (L'Heureux, January 21, 2017; Mock, 2014; Nicholson, 2015).



End Demand organizations have dominated the debate around sex work and sex trafficking for many years in Chicago—they are the primary source of information around trafficking, and they frequently work with policy makers and law enforcement to promote their ideas to the policy agenda. Evidence stemming from interviews and publications put forth by End Demand supporters indicate that there was an understanding among End Demand organizations that the criminal justice system and the human service system can temper each other: while law enforcement can play the order and justice role, they can defer to human services as a collaborating partner, one who can play a more humane role in the criminal justice system without challenging its existence. Yet, with the recent dissemination of harm reduction, and its subsequent translation to the sex worker rights agenda, they are starting to find themselves on the defensive end of the SAF. SWOP-Chicago, as adherents to the popular harm reduction service technology, are starting to find themselves on the offensive—after years of operating as a clandestine organization, their viewpoints are starting to be accepted as valid critiques of a criminal justice and abstinence oriented system that human service nonprofits are increasingly trying to distance themselves from. Finally, the recent concern about the role of gender in sex work, and how this has impacted the transgender population, has led to some organizations shifting focus away from policies that rely primarily on the criminal justice system, to policies that take a more holistic approach to viewing sex work—which SWOP has been able to tap into. In the next chapter, I will turn my focus specifically to SWOP, and discuss that as a result of the recent focus on issues of harm reduction and anti-criminalization among human service nonprofits, SWOP is part of an environment that has enabled them to professionalize as an organization, imbuing them with more resources and capacity to continue their work with human service providers.

## CHAPTER 5: ORGANIZATIONAL PROFESSIONALIZATION AND HUMAN SERVICE NONPROFIT COLLABORATION<sup>40</sup>

### Introduction

In July 2015, I attended a SWOP general meeting at an activist space in the Pilsen neighborhood—a large space that houses a workers’ union as well as a radical bookstore, where members can buy and trade books on topics including socialism and anarchism, biographies of Karl Marx, Emma Goldman, and Assata Shakur, as well as books written by Noam Chomsky and Angela Davis. As my knowledge of anarchism is limited, there were quite a few books and biographies that I failed to recognize. The space was covered with workers’ union posters, indicating their support for prison abolitionism, hospitality workers, the teachers union, railroad workers, sex workers, among others (this would be a far cry from the minimalist co-working space where SWOP eventually ended up). SWOP reserved the space the second Wednesday of the month, and even such, there were often people coming in and out of the space—there was a bedroom and a kitchen, and two or three people were often living there at once. On this meeting agenda was a series of controversial propositions (at least to some members) that involved SWOP transitioning from a small peer support collective, to a larger structured organization. These changes included but were not limited to, finding a new space to meet as members were getting frustrated with people coming in and out during meetings, as well as the fact that they were not able to store any SWOP-related items at the space.

A big object of the meeting was fundraising—right now, SWOP was in a good position to start receiving larger grants; they had increased their training of human service nonprofits, more organizations have been contacting them for their expertise, and Amnesty International had

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<sup>40</sup> Portions of this chapter were published as “Radical Professionals? Sex Worker Rights Activists and Collaboration With Human Service Nonprofits,” in the journal *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership and Governance* (Anasti, 2017).

recently voted for the decriminalization of sex work. The combination of these factors had put them in a prime position to start thinking about the growth and professionalization of their organization. This process of organizational growth, however, is not easy. As one member described, in order to get more money to increase the number of activities they were involved in, they needed to have a tighter organizational structure. One member said that the more structured and professionalized their meetings were, the more new members would realize that the organization has more responsibilities, with more activities that new members could volunteer for. Another member responded hastily that new members had told her that overly structured meetings were boring, particularly because most of them were there for peer support or to talk about advocacy on behalf of the sex trade. Another member broke this tension with a talk of having an organizational retreat, facilitated by a professional consultant—which members noted they did not really have the money to pay for. Conversations like this, and disagreements about where the organization is going and how the organization should be structured are common in organizations and social movements that are undergoing growing pains, moving from a fledgling radical support space to a legitimate training and service providing organization.

This chapter charts SWOP's development from an "underground" advocacy group to a more professionalized organization. By professionalization, I refer to the process through which individuals adapt specialized techniques, codes of ethics, and the rules of a professional body (Dryburgh, 1999; Wilensky, 1964). Professionalization may lead to a variety of benefits for nonprofit organizations, including a push for efficiency, transparency, and higher quality outcomes. However, it may also result in for-profit methods making their way to the nonprofit sector, leading to a focus on efficiency, reduced contributions to civil society, and cooptation

among other elements in their field (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000; Piven & Cloward, 1977).

For “underground” organizations, there may be particular hazards in professionalization as well (Kelley, Lune, & Murphy, 2005; Kochems et al., 1996). By underground organizations, I refer to organizations that provide non-sanctioned peer support, or services to a population that is engaged in illicit activity (i.e., syringe exchange programs, methadone clinics). These organizations are often politically radical as well, combining long-term political advocacy with underground service provision for the population they work with (for instance, Kelley et al. (2005) describe how the needle exchange in their study started as a political organization with the long term objective to improve society for intravenous drug-users). Of course, the transition of underground organizations into sanctioned nonprofits brings up concerns around the effect professionalization will have on these unique organizations (Kelley et al., 2005; Lune & Oberstein, 2001; Poindexter, 2007; Staggenborg, 1988; Wies, 2008). Like their more traditional nonprofit counterparts, underground organizations also experience benefits or drawbacks stemming from the process of professionalization.

I consider SWOP-Chicago to be an example of one of these “underground organizations” (Kelley et al., 2005). While I refer to them as an advocacy organization throughout this project—and advocacy still constitutes the organization’s largest activity—they have also sought to combine their advocacy efforts with peer support and small-scale service provision. In the early years of the organization, peer support was conducted clandestinely, in order to avoid contact with law enforcement, and to avoid outing members of the organization. Increasingly, however, they are moving into legitimate service provision while maintaining their political role as advocates on behalf of sex workers. As mentioned in Chapter 1, SWOP-Chicago seeks to address

issues that affect sex workers in Chicago such as access to a supportive community and health care, violence at the hands of police, clients, and employers, and cultural stigma surrounding the sex industry. SWOP's work consists of providing access to a supportive network of resources, bringing the voices of sex workers to the public, and attempting to change the legal system that puts sex workers at risk for violence and coercion (Sex Workers Outreach Project-Chicago, 2014). SWOP-Chicago has a reputation among sex workers rights activists as being one of the more active SWOP chapters, while their message of decriminalization and harm reduction around sex work has resonated with many human service nonprofits in Chicago. Yet, the main policy goals of sex worker rights organizations like SWOP-Chicago—the decriminalization and the destigmatization of sex work—continue to be rebuffed by legislators (Majic, 2014a).

The research undergirding this chapter builds upon past work on professionalization of nonprofits, particularly those that once functioned as politically active underground service providers (Des Jarlais, Paone, Friedman, Peyser, & Newman, 1995; Kelley et al., 2005). In the following pages, I focus on the processes through which SWOP-Chicago has professionalized through 1) a process of creating a professional network of human service nonprofits that provide services to sex workers, 2) a partnership with a legal clinic, and 3) self-directed efforts at providing human services. I address three research questions in this chapter: 1) how has professionalization affected SWOP's status within an institutional environment that has been traditionally hostile to sex workers? 2) how do SWOP-Chicago board members understand the benefits and drawbacks of their professionalization efforts? and 3) how has professionalization affected political advocacy efforts around sex work?

Contact with human service nonprofits has increased SWOP's ability to reach the most marginalized subsets of their population, who are more likely to be engaged in established

human service delivery systems. Contact has been facilitated through the creation of a network specifically for sex worker positive human service providers, as well as a foray into legal service provision and outreach services. Indeed, as SWOP-Chicago has cultivated an image that is more palatable to the perspectives of more traditional human service nonprofits, this may dampen their reputation among radical social movement organizations, as I will discuss later in the chapter. Generally, I find that SWOP-Chicago board members believe professionalization has largely benefited their advocacy efforts, although it may not be to their desired extent. Organizational professionalization, uncomfortable as it may be at times for underground organizations such as SWOP, has attracted the support of more established human service nonprofits, allowing SWOP to leverage their collaborations to promote their political agenda to more organizations and individuals in their institutional environment. Instead of professionalization dampening political participation of SWOP-Chicago, it has increased their ability and proclivity to engage in political advocacy by establishing credibility and legitimacy within a larger human service nonprofit domain. However, nonprofit collaborations stemming from professionalization have not translated to full-fledged support of SWOP's advocacy goals by HSNPs.

### ***Professionalization in the Nonprofit Sector***

For the nonprofit sector, the professionalization of the workforce has been striking (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016; Salamon, 1987, 2003; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Wies, 2008). As nonprofit human service and advocacy work was once carried out by well-intentioned charitable benefactors and volunteers, currently much of the work of professionalized nonprofits is carried out by paid leaders and educated professionals (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Staggenborg, 1988). Throughout the course of professionalization, nonprofit organizations may alter their organizational tactics, moving from radical protests and underground service provision, to legislative lobbying and sanctioned service provision. Through professionalization, nonprofits

begin to rely more on outcome reports, policy expertise, and strict accountability for revenue and expenses, all which require more professionalized staff.

While professionalization may lead to a variety of benefits for nonprofits, including a push for transparency and higher quality outcomes, it is also a process that relies on the enhancement of the professionals' power and status (Andreassen, Breit, & Legard, 2014) which may push aside concerns about vulnerable populations. Some scholars fear that the increased professionalization of the nonprofit sector may lead to an undue focus on organizational maintenance goals, rather than the charitable goals on which the nonprofit sector was founded (Frumkin, 2002; Markowitz & Tice, 2002). Others worry that professionalization will result in the practices of the for-profit sector making its way to the nonprofit sector, resulting in a emphasis on efficiency above expressed mission (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000; Kivel, 2007). As the demand for professionalized employees increases, involvement of community members in advocacy and/or service provision may decrease, which diminishes the voice of community members in the agency (Cain et al., 2013; Wies, 2008). However, the promotion of education and training among nonprofit workers can be necessary when providing complex human services to marginalized populations, or to have more influence in the policy process (Cain, 1997). Additionally, for organizations that advocate on behalf of invisible and marginalized populations, the entry into service provision (which will require some professionalization) is not necessarily inconsistent with social change goals (Gates, 2014; Hyde, 2000; Majic 2014).

Regardless of the benefits and/or drawbacks of professionalization, innovations in ideas and practices disseminate through the work of professionals (Hwang & Powell, 2009, p. 271). This has implications for professionalization efforts among organizations that may not fit the

conception of a typical advocacy or human service nonprofit. Many nonprofits are involved in substantial political action (e.g., protests, lobbying, petitioning) on behalf of their clients, and provide services that the state is unwilling to fund (Kelley et al., 2005; Meyer, 2010; Minkoff, 2002). These organizations are often peer-led and occupy a liminal space between a human service agency and a political advocacy group. As professionalized practices have disseminated through the human service nonprofit sector, it is likely that similar processes are undertaken by these politically active service providing organizations, as a result of normative and mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

### ***Professionalization in “Underground” Service Providing Organizations***

Underground service organizations, or politically active organizations that provide peer-led services to populations engaged in illicit activities, are professionalizing as well (Henman, Paone, Des Jarlais, Kochems, & Friedman, 1998; Kelley et al., 2005). Underground service organizations are organizations that are typically started by members of the affected population, providing services that state actors are unwilling to fund. Historical and contemporary examples include underground abortion services and pro-choice organizations (Kaplan, 1995; Staggenborg, 1988), needle exchanges (Henman et al., 1998; Kelley et al., 2005; Kochems et al., 1996; Lane, Lurie, Bowser, Kahn, & Chen, 2000), methadone programs (Des Jarlais et al., 1995), and AIDS service organizations (Cain, 1997; Poindexter, 2002). Underground organizations share a dual commitment to social change goals and human service provision. While the work that many underground organizations are doing may now be considered “above ground,” I continue to utilize the term in order to delineate organizations that work with hidden populations in a social change capacity.

Over time, many underground organizations have gained status as a legal agency, and may even receive state funding. The transition from “unsanctioned” to “legitimized” results in a



variety of organizational changes, including the stabilization of a physical location, the creation of an organizational leadership hierarchy, the formalization of “core functions” (Kelley et al., 2005, p. 363), and the professionalization of service staff (Des Jarlais et al., 1995; Kochems et al., 1996). Studies of organizations that began with social change agendas and strategies have documented the tensions and benefits in transitioning to a more professionalized model (Kelley et al., 2005; Lune, 2002; Poindexter, 2002, 2007; Staggenborg, 1988). For these organizations, professionalization has resulted in an increase in organizational effectiveness: organizations may acquire increased legitimacy and public visibility, they may expand the number of people served, they innovate service provision and they may help vulnerable populations to be heard in the political process (Andreassen et al., 2014). However, there remains a concern that professionalization leads to conflicts around the hiring of professionalized management that is unaware of community concerns, and the mainstreaming and dampening of political involvement (Kelley et al., 2005; Kochems et al., 1996). Some scholars are concerned that as organizations become professionalized, they may become co-opted by mainstream political organizations, shifting their radical activism into support of policies that may be appealing to mainstream providers, but not their constituents (INCITE!, 2007; Lune, 2002).

### **Professionalization of SWOP-Chicago**

Below, I present elements of the professionalization of SWOP-Chicago. After briefly describing SWOP-Chicago’s transition into a 501c3 nonprofit, I discuss (1) how the creation of a network of service providers positively reconfigured their institutional environment, increasing their visibility among human service nonprofits and bolstering an image of professionalization through opportunities to provide trainings and share expertise and (2) how a foray into service provision resulted in necessary concrete steps toward organizational professionalization, as well

as increased legitimacy among HSNPs. I also discuss SWOP board members' perception of professionalization, and how their efforts at professionalization have affected their reputation within their institutional environment. I conclude this section with a discussion of how professionalization has affected SWOP-Chicago's political advocacy efforts.

### ***Legal Professionalization***

The harbinger of SWOP Chicago's professionalization was their transition to a 501c3 nonprofit organization. While this status change allows them to obtain tax-deductible donations, the government technically has more oversight to restrict how they organize and conduct their political activity. Some studies have noted that the transition to becoming a 501c3 can be a difficult and controversial process, particularly for members hesitant to see the organization transition away from radical and oppositional politics (Majic, 2014b). Yet for SWOP-Chicago, becoming a 501c3 was not a significant concern for members. Instead of viewing the transition as a form of co-optation, they interpreted the organizational change as pragmatic; they would be able to gain legitimacy as a 501c3, while also being able to accept donations that were tax-deductible. As their funding does come primarily from individual donations, the 501c3 status may result in additional funding from individuals who wish to take advantage of tax-deductible donations, as well as from foundations that may only give to 501c3 nonprofits. The pursuit of government funding has not been a discussion among members, although most members believe that obtaining government funding for their work at this juncture is not feasible. Moreover, their general lack of contact with government officials assuages their fears regarding any form of state co-optation of their mission.

### ***Organizational Professionalization***

SWOP-Chicago is an all-volunteer organization with a small budget, yet their relative dearth of resources has not prevented the organization from taking concrete steps towards professionalization. As mentioned in Chapter 1, for a decade they had no physical stable location, meeting in donated space by non-profits, or in members' living rooms. As of March 2016, they have started to rent out a co-working space. The initial form of SWOP started out as a collective reminiscent of Rothschild-Whitt's (1979) definition of an "alternative institution" (p. 509), organizations defined by "their members resolve to build organizations which are parallel to, but outside of, established institutions and which fulfill social needs without recourse to bureaucratic authority" (p. 510). SWOP members are insistent about their need to maintain a non-hierarchical organization through the creation of an inclusive community, although I will note that in order to streamline communication, maintain partnerships, and transition to a 501c3 nonprofit, they have had to create a leadership board, tasked with decision-making for the organization.

Several members have recently taken to establishing their own credentials as individual service providers, forming personal and professional relationships with social workers and other employees of service nonprofits, working inside what has been called the "nonprofit industrial complex" (INCITE!, 2007). Almost all members have some experience working in nonprofit organizations, and four of nine board members have, or are working towards, graduate degrees in social work or related fields. While establishing themselves as nonprofit insiders, they have negotiated and embodied several different identities as activists and service providers.

## **Network Formation and Collaboration**

### ***Providers and Resources Offering Services to Sex Workers (PROS) Network***

Prior to the creation of SWOP-Chicago, there were minimal peer support or service resources for adult sex workers in Chicago<sup>41</sup>. Over the past decade, SWOP board members received many requests from sex workers for referrals to services where sex workers could be “out” without fear of judgment, arrest or “rescue”. Concurrently, research reports published in Chicago stated that social service agencies were among the biggest offenders of sources of harm to youth (ages 12-24) in the sex trade, with one report noting: “Girls are denied help from systems such as DCFS<sup>42</sup>, police, and the legal system, hospitals, shelters, and drug treatment programs because of their involvement in the sex trade, because they are trans girls, or because they are queer, because they are young, because they are homeless, and because they use drugs” (Iman, Fullwood, Paz, W, & Hassan, 2009, p. 30). For the sex worker population, there was a distinct need to figure out which service providing organizations were safe to contact and to refer persons out to. SWOP board members had connections to a few service providers they trusted, yet there was not a way to identify organizations that may provide services that are harmful or “rescue-based”. Sex workers noted that there was a need for service providers with cultural competency at all levels of the industry: street-based workers were more likely to seek out basic needs services, while all workers may desire access to non-judgmental mental health professionals, legal services and physicians. Thus, for a diverse population of sex workers in Chicago, there was a need for a centralized database of trusted service professionals that workers could access.

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<sup>41</sup> The Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP) was a member based social justice organization in Chicago that was led by youth of color with current or former experience in the sex trade. They closed in 2013 after a decade of organizing, research, and support work. More information is available at [www.youarepriceless.org](http://www.youarepriceless.org).

When confronted with these numerous requests for trainings, SWOP-Chicago's response was to create a network of service providers committed to providing non-judgmental services to sex workers, called the Providers and Resources Offering Services to Sex Workers (PROS) Network. The PROS network is "a list of service providers and organizations that several of us either had relationships with, or were recommended providers that we would recommend to our sex worker friends," said a board member. This network of providers allowed for a distillation of services and resources in a field that is minimally funded, and uniquely placed SWOP as a bridge-builder and centerpiece within this organizational network. SWOP has been able to bring members of the network together for meetings, lunch events, and trainings. Creating this network was the result of a shift in orientation of SWOP from strictly a peer support group, to establishing a focus on service provision and collaboration with service providers. SWOP members hoped that this network would encourage support of their organization in two ways: 1) creating a referral and resource network of service providers and 2) fostering support of SWOP's advocacy goals.

Board members of SWOP sought to promote their organization as a group of professionals that had the capacity and expertise to educate HSNPs on ways to appropriately serve sex workers. While there has been a fear of co-optation among similar-minded underground activists towards this focus on appeasing the mainstream human service establishment (Majic 2014b) SWOP members did not find the creation of this network, nor connecting with service providers incompatible with their social justice mission. One board member noted: "I think that there are some activist groups that might not feel that collaborating with social services is the most resourceful way of going about things, which is unfortunate... but

I think that if we are being real with ourselves, services are a massively important thing to have.”

Another board member noted:

“I see it [PROS Network] as just like a more sophisticated, hopefully more accessible way to share information, but that also helps people, organizations, service providers, that might want to be better. There are not any other trainings [for working with sex workers] out there, so it’s a way for us to also target organizations, or organizations to find us to give them more training too.”

As implied by this quote, SWOP members see the creation of this network as a mechanism through which they can reach an increased number of possible allies in the mainstream nonprofit establishment, particularly providers that are tasked with serving the most marginalized members of the sex worker community. They are aware that co-optation by larger organizations is possible, yet the ability to present themselves as professionals, sharing information and training service providers trumps the fear that their mission may be usurped by the mainstream social service establishment.

SWOP board members invoked a discourse around professionalization when discussing the PROS network, claiming that the network has given them a means through which they “can be taken seriously” and have noted that it has succeeded in shifting the orientation of some mainstream service providers to accept the idea of harm reduction and trauma informed modalities with sex workers. Service providers connected with the PROS network also recognized SWOP’s professionalization and expertise, as one mental health service provider stated:

“I was at a training that [organization] had when SWOP came in, because I’m part of our trauma committee and we recognize that many people in the universe are traumatized, and they express things in different ways... So, a few voices were like, because of their work in connecting disparate people we need to bring SWOP in to do a training on the connection between trauma and stigma and sex work.”

Respondents such as the one quoted above that have contacted SWOP-Chicago for trainings noted they are extremely appreciative of SWOP's goals and commitment to non-judgmental services for individuals in the sex trade, and have appreciated their role in creating the PROS network.

Members of SWOP are aware that some organizations in the nonprofit human service establishment may consider their goal to decriminalize sex work "radical", and are cognizant that an unprofessional reputation characterized by miscommunication, tardiness and lack of interest in service provision may damage their reputation with potential allies. Within SWOP, there are frequent jokes about the tendency for sex workers to run consistently late, while acknowledging that members are juggling multiple work and volunteer commitments. But something as simple as tardiness can invoke an unprofessional nature that SWOP members are trying to diminish through the creation of this network. One member noted that she worries that "some of the organizations may not fully understand our limitations," and "worries that they may see us as flaky", when, for instance, SWOP members may run late to a meeting, or not respond to requests for trainings immediately. SWOP has used relationships with PROS members to discuss the process of becoming a more professionalized and formal organization, while also acknowledging the challenges therein:

"I think that they [the relationships] result in...we're like in junior high, and we need to graduate to get more organized and bring in some formality and some professionalism because I think that's what's been missing, and it's hard because we are an all-volunteer grassroots organization...*but they have helped us to get a seat at the table which wasn't present before*" [emphasis added]

This "seat at the table" that the member refers to has allowed SWOP to promote their unique policy approach to organizations and institutions that may not be aware of SWOP or

SWOP's mission—in a sense, they have legitimized themselves within the community of human service nonprofits that they are seeking to influence.

### **Transition to Service Provision**

For radical advocacy organizations, the transition to service provision can help the organization gain legitimacy, but may also lead to the organization losing its activist edge (Piven & Cloward, 1977). In this section, I discuss SWOP's entry into direct service provision, which serves as a transitioning tool towards further professionalization. While the services provided are still minimal, other service providers are looking to their unique service provision as possible resources for their clients, as well as an example of how to engage with and reach sex workers.

### ***Partnership to Provide Legal Services***

About a year and a half after the creation of the PROS network, SWOP was approached to partner with an activist law clinic. This law clinic has not only been formative in SWOP's development as a professional organization, but has also enabled them to reach more marginalized subsets of the sex worker population. Each legal clinic is held twice monthly at a different service nonprofit in Chicago—maintaining a regular monthly clinic and fostering a partnership with trained lawyers has contributed to SWOP's professional image as reliable collaborators that are providing a necessary service to nonprofits around Chicago. The legal clinic works with individuals that have been involved in the sex trade in some capacity, have an income that is 200 percent of the federal poverty line, and/or have been precariously housed sometime over the past 12 months.

The partnership with the legal clinic has resulted in a significant, yet incremental professionalization of SWOP. The partnership required the following: first, they needed a clear point person for the legal clinic to contact, second, they needed to provide culturally competent



volunteers, and third, they needed a permanent physical location to hold the legal clinic. Each of these three tasks required organizational changes that are consistent with the process of professionalization. After one legal clinic lacked any volunteers due to miscommunication errors, it became necessary for SWOP to appoint a person in charge of coordinating the legal clinic. Although members of SWOP acknowledged that appointing a “person in charge” might appear to be contradictory to their commitment in remaining a non-hierarchical organization, they considered it necessary to ensure seamless communication with the legal clinic. Moreover, finding a stable location for the organization is a key aspect of professionalization, and is considered an early step toward hiring professional and managerial staff (Des Jarlais et al., 1995; Kelley et al., 2005). Instead of relocating around Chicago to hold meetings and other organizational events, all of their correspondence is now located in one central location, which members thought was a huge development in the growth of SWOP.

With the creation of the legal clinic, SWOP members emphasized how the clinic was able to further meet its mission of reaching members of their population that were the most marginalized and that were more likely to be affected by legal systems. Being able to offer the legal clinic as a resource to HSNPs bolstered their appearance of professionalization. At this juncture, members of SWOP are not only able to provide trainings on service provision with sex workers, but they are also able to directly provide services to human service clients, as well as provide trainings on prostitution and legal system involvement—something that is in demand among HSNPs.

While the legal clinic has resulted in organizational change towards professionalization, members also saw it as a pragmatic way to better serve members of their community. Several board members noted that they were inspired to bolster their advocacy and political work,

particularly as they had a legal team backing their activist efforts. Members of the legal clinic *do not* want SWOP to dampen their advocacy goals, and want to provide legal support and advice for SWOP to continue their radical activist work. In fact, when SWOP renewed their partnership with the legal clinic, one of the things they asked was “to be providing them more opportunities to be more involved with advocacy work on a policy level”. Members of the legal clinic sought out SWOP specifically because they were concerned that legal services were becoming “increasingly centralized” and they wanted to “harness the power of activist organizations,” like SWOP, as one lawyer described the difficulties of pursuing social change within the legal system:

Social justice is very difficult, particularly within the law...as lawyers it's hard to make real change because you're working within this system, and framework. But, that's why I think these activist cases excite us so much, and a lot of the cases that we are taking are to make a statement...it's also, the justice aspect is that we see stigma in all the communities that we serve...[such as] sex workers.”

### ***Outreach Program***

In an effort to address the lack of basic need services for street-based sex workers, SWOP-Chicago created an outreach program to reach sex workers and those in the street economy. Outreach, in this case, consists of a small group of individuals passing out safer sex supplies and literature. The program is located in the West Side of Chicago, an area of the city with a high number of prostitution-related arrests. This was an intentional choice by SWOP in the hopes that they would be able to reach street-based workers in an area that lacks social services, as much of the services for this population are available only on the North (specifically Northeast) side of Chicago.

In addition to being a high crime area, over 50 percent of the population in the neighborhood lives below the federal poverty line, while over 90 percent of residents are black. There is a great deal of underground economic activity (e.g. people selling cigarettes and drugs on the street is a common sight) in the area and unemployment rates are high. The outreach SWOP conducts is a small affair, and located in a high foot-traffic area near a liquor store. There is a small table set up, with donated pastries, clothing, makeup, toiletries, condoms, needles (sometimes), brochures and cards advertising SWOP's services, clothing, water, juice and fruit (in the summer) and coffee (in the winter). There is a nearby "stroll" where women engage in street-based sex work. There is a men's shelter and a city-run warming center close to the outreach site, but in general human services in the area are minimal. Many of the residents who come to the outreach site for the first time assume that SWOP is a religious organization there to provide charity services.

SWOP instituted their outreach services with a resource-based collaboration with another service nonprofit. The collaboration consisted primarily of sharing resources (condoms, needles, used clothing) with the other organization, which receives these items from the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH). When asked how the relationship got started, the director stated that the work that SWOP does overlaps with their own:

"With SWOP, I'm familiar with their Internet presence, there's a Chicago element to it. And more and more of it [their work] overlaps with [our organization] and the work in Chicago. So we've done stuff together, collaborated with each other. And we help with the outreach site that SWOP does, we're always happy to help with that. Anything that SWOP wants to get involved with, we're happy to help them get involved."

By promoting this work as human service provision, SWOP cultivated an increasingly professional image that aligned with much of the service work that is being done by service

nonprofits in the city. Sex workers are a notoriously hard population to reach: this is likely why SWOP's institution of outreach services, despite its low-budget bare bones approach, attracted the interest of human service nonprofits. Several providers were privy to SWOP's outreach and volunteered to provide things that SWOP did not have the capacity to provide, including HIV testing services and needle exchange. All of them mentioned that SWOP's approach to outreach services, and its location in the west side of Chicago led them to seek out collaboration. As one service provider (and current outreach collaborator) stated when she talked about why she went to outreach:

“[we were working on an event with SWOP] and I wanted to be more familiar with what SWOP does before the event...I think it's really awesome what SWOP is doing...I think I was really impressed the first time I went, which I kind of just stayed at out of curiosity, because I wanted to know more about SWOP. Just seeing how embedded outreach is in that community, and how many people it's reaching, and really see how social services can kind of start out.”

Although this provider described how SWOP's outreach was starting out, which may not imply professionalization, her thoughts about “how embedded outreach is in that community” indicates that SWOP has established themselves as the purveyors of services in this community.

### **Effects of Professionalization on Political Advocacy**

SWOP members do feel that their organization has professionalized considerably, and service providers have legitimized SWOP's professionalization by contacting them for trainings and service collaborations. Yet SWOP also remains a grassroots organization that depends entirely on volunteer labor, and it remains difficult to accomplish all of the tasks expected of a fully professionalized organization with paid staff. As one service provider notes, it is hard to forge this kind of professionalization and organizational work when there is no paid staff:

“Yeah, I know that when SWOP launched the PROS network, you know, we signed on immediately, and a lot of people did, but I wonder if it is what they hoped it would be. I know that it hasn't been updated in a while, I think that's in the works, but it hasn't happened, so it sort of feels that that was a great idea, but you probably need a full time person in charge of that sort of stuff.”

For some service nonprofits, SWOP's professionalization may be sufficient for contacting them to do trainings or to speak at events, but they do not buy into the former's policy and advocacy goals. There are varying reasons why human service nonprofits are able to support service collaboration, but stop short when supporting SWOP's advocacy goals. For instance, one respondent from a health clinic stated that they weren't able to transcend their organization's relatively mainstream values, which barely includes the inclusion of LGBTQ populations:

“A lot of work in this current climate is more hush-hush, and I'm surprised that you know that we're on the PROS website because most people don't know that...some of the work we do can't be against the mainstream, because of who we are. People don't think LGBT, let alone sex work when they think of us.”

For other organizations, advocacy is simply difficult, even if they may completely agree with SWOP's goals. As one respondent of a housing organization stated, their work has mostly been within the areas of homelessness and housing:

...well most of our little advocacy work has really been in the areas of homelessness and housing. We're just like, and we are in the SWOP network, the PROS network. We do intentionally say that we are trying to do good work in that area, but I think like, we don't do advocacy work in general.

Others mentioned that they do not do advocacy because of restrictions around 501(c)(3) regulations, or that they might do advocacy around sex worker rights as individuals, but not as a representative of their organization. One of SWOP's board members pointed out their frustration with the contradictory nature of service vs. advocacy support:

“No, I do want to say outright, that we get no support, or we get very little support if none, from any organizations about any of the advocacy or campaigns that we do. I will say personally that I sent out a lot of emails to a lot of people begging them to support us with the Amnesty campaign [the campaign to propose a policy to decriminalize sex work] that was here, and we didn’t get support.

The board member, while upset that SWOP has gotten minimal advocacy support from their human service allies, notes that she understands that many nonprofits fear supporting SWOP’s policy goals; after all, sex workers are not the focus of many HSNPs, complete decriminalization of sex work remains highly contentious, and sex workers themselves lack insider political clout. One board member noted that SWOP had to work extra hard to prove themselves as professionals because “there’s certain populations, if its women and children that are not at all culpable for what their suffering is, then it’s really easy to support...but if you’re a current or former sex worker, particularly current, then it’s difficult.” Similar sentiments have not gone unnoticed by some service providers, who assert that SWOP needs to be more forceful promoting their unique combination of professionalism and their status as current and former sex workers. One noted that SWOP should be a more forceful leader, as they are the organization that is going to push others into this type of advocacy:

“Everyone that’s doing this work within the institution, within this system, we’re doing it because we want to help people. Of course you listen to your participants, but you don’t listen to them in the same way, as you would listen to someone that represents this organization like SWOP. And you know, and I think, and you’ve got people that are both now. And I think that that’s a really interesting and unique position as well, to come in and say, you know, I’m a social worker and I’m a sex worker, and that kind of rocks people’s world, because they have these compartmentalized views of who is a sex worker and who is a drug user, and it’s allowed us to challenge those limited viewpoints, and for them to sort of infiltrate that.”

This respondent articulates that SWOP needs to take advantage of their position as professional experts, as well as people with lived experience in order to “challenge” others’ “limited viewpoints” on sex work and social work. They go on to note that they need to continue “going into organizations and trainings...that is probably the most important thing they can do in getting a seat at the table...some places may not be welcoming, but I think it’s really important for SWOP to push for a seat at the table, to show their face, to influence policies and practices for these organizations.” However, negotiating the realm of professionalized service provision with radical activism can still lead to an asymmetrical political identity, as members negotiate advocacy pressures from both HSNPs, and other more radical activist groups (Lune & Oberstein, 2001). HSNPs still perceive SWOP as having radical ideas around sex work, even as the PROS network has connected them to the nonprofit establishment. As one service provider noted, she sought to bring activists into the “nonprofit industrial complex” fold, which she claims will help “get them to sort of radicalize our group a little and for us to soften them a bit”.

Yet at the same time that SWOP is receiving messages that further professionalization will help them gain a seat at the nonprofit establishment policy table, some organizations have critiqued them for eschewing their radical roots. As one board member with connections to multiple radical organizations told me:

“Some people...have done things here and there with SWOP, but seem to have an aversion to them. I think that’s because they feel that SWOP isn’t radical enough, which is unfortunate...Although sometimes I feel that there is not a whole talk of recent Chicago related arrests, where they arrested people who are in the sex trade...I think that is something that we could talk about more than we do...although it’s not like we’re constantly looking at the police blotter.”

In the context of this quote, it is important to consider how different advocacy, social justice, and human service groups define professionalization, and the varying pressures

organizations are under to professionalize (or not) in order to meet their mission. SWOP members have admitted that they “haven’t been doing as much advocacy work as in the past,” and the “focus the past couple of years has been more on service provision,” which has met with mixed acceptance among organizations in their environment. There is some promise that government institutions are acknowledging them, at the least. For instance, although they are not funded by government sources, one member stated that they have utilized their entry into service provision to leverage professional relationship building with local political officials:

“Since we do outreach now, the state offers trainings on stuff. So IDPH [Illinois Department of Public Health], or like the CDC [Centers for Disease Control] offers these trainings on new methods of new HIV interventions. They offer trainings on a lot of different things. So these either intensive trainings, or conferences can be incredible ways to build relationships with public health officials. Or, and we let the alderman know that we were offering outreach services in his ward. And that was really positive.”

SWOP members, most of whom had little experience with formal political processes, went to the alderman because participants in their outreach services repeatedly asked them for referrals to housing and rehabilitation services. When members of SWOP presented housing as the primary need of constituents in the neighborhood, the alderman was receptive to their concern. The alderman recognized the need in his area, and corroborated SWOP’s beliefs about the individuals in the area, giving them permission to provide services in their ward.<sup>43</sup> Recently, they have been contacted by the Chicago Department of Public Health [CDPH] to assist them with a health survey they are doing with female sex workers. While neither of these points to a

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<sup>43</sup> SWOP is even able to operate in the area without problems from the police, which is an important development considering the population they are serving (as well as the name of the organization). Several times while conducting outreach, police officers have stopped and asked whether or not they are SWOP—upon answering yes, the police officers say, “thanks, have a great day”. This has resulted in some mixed feelings about SWOP, which consists of members that are largely anti-police. On the one hand, having police officers recognize your organization



*close* relationship per se, even minimal positive contact with public officials allows SWOP to voice the concerns of their marginalized population to policy makers and government departments—a small but important step in political advocacy.

## **Conclusion**

For some activists, professionalization is seen as a negative concept that can serve to shift organizational goals away from the social justice principles on which they were founded. Yet, professionalization occurs on a continuum. Although professionalization is often associated with the procurement of paid staff, I show that organizations can transition between various aspects of professionalization. Through this chapter, I have demonstrated that organizational professionalization has broadened the political repertoire and increased the number of allies of SWOP-Chicago, and in the process has altered their advocacy and service provision strategies. SWOP-Chicago board members conveyed that they have embraced the process of professionalization as they believe establishing professional networks and services that align with the missions of local HSNPs will help them reach more marginalized subsets of their population, and increase their advocacy reach.

SWOP-Chicago's in-between status of an underground organization and a professional nonprofit has had some significant benefits. They are accepted by some organizations as a professional organization, and have a reputation of a radical organization among others, giving them a unique vantage point with which to navigate their institutional environment consisting of both HSNPs and activist groups. For similarly professionalizing organizations, it remains to be seen how professionalization may affect their reputation among other activist organizations: does a foray into service provision reduce the respect and legitimacy that former peer-support and advocacy organizations have among more radical groups?

I note in this chapter that professionalization may reconfigure how organizational members perceive their relationship with other radical groups. As Lune and Oberstein (2001) contend, as organizations professionalize, increasingly radical organizations may emerge, as the choice of an organization to take on a particular mission defines empty spaces for other organizations to occupy. For instance, Lune and Oberstein note that the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), an HIV/AIDS service organization in New York City, sought to eschew radical politics and focus on service provision. As a result, they opened the organizational field for the radical political action group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). If SWOP and other similar advocacy organizations undergo a transition into service provision, they may create space for more radical political organizations to arise. Either way, underground organizations transitioning to service provision may not lead to the demise of radical politics, but may result in a reconfiguration in how radical politics is developed.

In the end, political and radical organizations in liminal stages of professionalization have to contend with a multitude of pressures around whether to professionalize, how to professionalize, and how professionalization will dampen their advocacy and peer support efforts. This chapter has examined the ways in which a radical advocacy organization has professionalized, resulting in the creation of relationships with mainstream service providers, and entry into service provision. This is a considerable feat, as they are engaging with a local political environment that is actively antagonistic toward sex workers. Arguments against professionalization and a complete return to radical politics must contend with the political, economic and cultural pressures that similar organizations are under to professionalize their structure. When advocating for a population as marginalized as sex workers, rebelling against the

prospect of professionalization may lead to an increasingly insular approach to advocacy and service provision that may fail to transcend the status quo.

The following chapter turns from a focus on SWOP-Chicago, to a focus on how human service nonprofits (and employees at human service nonprofits) are responding to efforts by SWOP and End Demand Illinois to include them in their collaborative efforts. While SWOP-Chicago has made inroads in working with human service nonprofits (something which End Demand Illinois has been doing for a longer period of time), employees at human service nonprofits have been managing and responding to the different logics these organizations are promoting.

## CHAPTER 6: INHABITED INSTITUTIONS AND THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS IN SHIFTING ORGANIZATIONAL LOGICS

### **Introduction**

In March 2016, I arrived at a Starbucks at around 9:15 for a meeting with volunteers from human service agencies across Chicago who had contacted SWOP to work on a project dispelling rumors about sex work. As I got to the Starbucks, I ordered a tea and a coffee, and realized I did not know what any of the volunteers looked like. I texted a board member from SWOP, who mentioned that she was running a bit late and informed me the name of the person that we were meeting with. Fortuitously, I saw that the person sitting beside me had that name written on her Starbucks coffee cup, and I introduced myself. The woman, of Southeast Asian descent, was joined by two white women and a black man, all in their early to mid twenties. She asked me what I already knew about the project, and I mention what had been told to me by SWOP board members—they wanted to make videos dispelling harmful rumors about sex workers and the false dichotomy between trafficking and sex work, featuring both non-sex worker activists, and sex workers. Additionally, they wanted to hold a self-care event that would be open to people formerly and currently involved in the sex trade. She noted that she wasn't sure if they would be allowed by their organization to do the videos (in the end, they did not end up doing them), but really wanted to put on the sex worker self care night, which would include massage, yoga, art therapy, free HIV testing, among other things.

I asked one of the volunteers how they heard about SWOP, and she noted that she had attended an event put on by SWOP a few months back, noting that she thought they were doing great work—she went on to say that they had wanted to work with the sex worker community for a while, and found SWOP to be their best resource for connecting with this community. The group of volunteers was very attentive to SWOP board members for their input—they asked

whether it was okay to hold the event in a church (SWOP answered only if it was Unitarian or an prominent LGBTQ friendly church—otherwise attendees may fear that it is a diversion program); the type of language to be used on advertising materials; whether the event should be public or private (SWOP answered that the event should be advertised publicly, but that people would email in order to obtain the address).

At the end of these meeting, I noticed that these are all individuals that have experience in other social justice movements (Black Lives Matter, Slutwalk, etc.) but some are unable to do advocacy as part of their organization, and sex worker advocacy would be particularly “radical”. The volunteers are young, all in their early-mid 20s; all had just graduated from college and had a genuine interest in providing support for sex workers rights. Although they did not end up producing the videos, they did end up holding a self-care day. Thus, the volunteers were able to advertise this event to clients and staff within their agencies, promoting it as a support group for sex workers, that was open to human service clients that identified as currently or formerly involved in the sex trade. While the self-care event was a less controversial entry point into sex worker rights than were the videos, it was still a way for these individual volunteers to introduce this topic into their agencies.

Human service nonprofits are highly heterogeneous in their responses to the issues of trafficking and sex work. This chapter will explore the ways in which human service nonprofits confront competing logics (i.e., End Demand/abolitionist and sex workers rights/harm reduction), primarily through explicating how meanings and narratives are shaped by individuals *within* human service nonprofits. Organizations “confront incompatible prescriptions from multiple institutional logics,” (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011, p. 317), and with sex work, staff members need to decide how they must work with their clients

that are engaged in the sex trade, while being confronted with divergent narratives advanced by the advocacy organizations. The ways in which individuals work with these logics may depend upon a multitude of factors, including whether the organization receives public funding; whether or not it is religious or secular; whether or not they have prior collaborations with End Demand organizations or SWOP; whether or not it abides by a harm reduction approach to service provision; and the type of population that the organization serves.

As Chapter 4 on SAFs noted, advocacy organizations are working both within (in the case of End Demand) and against (in the case of SWOP) established institutions to mold the SAF in their preferred image. In Chapter 5, I demonstrated how relationships between human service nonprofits, and the challenger organization, SWOP-Chicago, were solidified through SWOP's move toward professionalization. This final empirical chapter takes a deeper look into the micro-foundations of these collaborations, and notes how interactions between individuals working at different advocacy and human service nonprofits constitute meanings around these varying logics. For some organizations, the individual and organizations may espouse the same logics: for others, individuals may be working to alter organizational logics according to their preferred logic.

In looking at organizational and individual responses to the institutional complexity of sex work I take an inhabited institutions approach as advanced by Hallett and Ventresca (2006, p. 213), whereby institutions provide a setting of meaning making between and among individuals. In this chapter, I reiterate what I have noted throughout this dissertation that most human service nonprofits in this field do not take an explicit stance on how they provide services to sex workers. Thus, they rely on their relationships and collaborations with advocacy organizations to glean knowledge about appropriate ways of providing service provision. In this

chapter I argue that this often is facilitated at the individual level, as it is people inside organizations who may be tasked with (or, alternatively, choose to take on) the creation of collaborations with advocacy organizations that may provide them with tools and knowledge to provide more effective human services to sex workers.

This chapter addresses two primary research questions: 1) What are the different ways in which human service nonprofit organizations responded to the institutional complexity of policies surrounding sex work? 2) How have micro-interactions on the individual level created and sustained macro-activities, such as organizational collaboration? In the analysis section of this chapter, I first describe how human service organizations as an entity manage institutional complexity. I note that a minority of organizations publicly espouse clear logics about their work with sex workers—meaning that as an organization they either advocate strongly for the abolition of the sex trade, or they advocate strongly for the decriminalization of the sex trade. A majority of organizations, however, do not follow a specific logic: they either 1) do not take a stance on sex work, or 2) engage in work with both End Demand and SWOP, and have tried to find ways to combine the two logics of abolitionism and decriminalization. When analyzing these organizations, I turn my focus to the individual level, analyzing how individuals within organizations manage this complexity as they are trying to find ways through which their organization can more forcefully advocate.

### **Institutional Complexity**

Organizations face institutional complexity when there are multiple competing logics within fields, particularly when these fields have different sets of expectations for operating (Greenwood et al., 2011). As mentioned in Chapter 1, logics are overarching guidelines that determine how organizations in a given field work in different types of situations. Fields can be extremely fragmented and contested, and different institutional logics may be competing to

shape the ways organizations respond to varying issues (such as in the case of sex work and sex trafficking) (Bertels & Lawrence, 2016; Lounsbury, 2007; Schneiberg & Soule, 2005). D'Aunno, Sutton, and Price (1991, p. 320) note that “conforming to strong environment beliefs and rules is difficult for many organizations...because they face fragmented environments in which multiple independent groups and organizations make demands that are at best uncoordinated”. Within these fragmented fields, organizations struggle to make sense of the institutional pressures put on them from competing sources.

Although institutional complexity may frequently be considered a struggle for organizations as they are grappling how to deal with the multiple institutional logics they are confronted with, institutional complexity may also serve as a positive. Having a multiplicity of different logics to work with may lead to more creative and innovative solutions to complex social problems. Competing and fragmented logics can certainly coexist and rivalry between logics can be managed “through the development of collaborative relationships” (Reay & Hinings, 2009, p. 629). I discuss in this chapter how institutional complexity can be addressed through collaborative relationships (specifically with SWOP), and how these collaborative relationships are achieved via micro-interactions.

### **Bringing in the Micro in Institutionalization: Symbolic Interactionism, Micro-Level Processes and “Inhabited Institutions”**

Crucial to the institutionalization process is how employees of organizations understand collective meaning that is constructed from bottom up processes (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), in addition to how top-down institutional logics structure individual behavior. Broadly speaking, meaning in society can be constructed through micro-interactions, a process made famous through the symbolic interactionist work of Erving Goffman (1967, 1974). To note, individuals are conscious agents in shaping the world that they live in, and are not just passively goaded by



societal structures. Despite this well-established relationship between macro and micro, work on institutionalization via the institutional logics paradigm often focuses on the macro level, seeking to understand how higher level institutional logics structure behavior within organizations. Exclusively emphasizing top-down approaches precludes effective theorizing around how micro-interactions may solidify new organizational and cultural repertoires within society. Taking into account Giddens' structuration theory (1984), which emphasizes that structure and individual agency constitute each other, scholars have suggested we broaden the conversation in organizational theory to include more micro-level approaches to studying behavior (Barley, 2008; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Powell & Colyvas, 2008).

Hallett and Ventresca (2006), extending upon the need to incorporate micro-level perspectives, identify institutions as being "inhabited", noting that "while institutional logics carry meaning, it is also true that meaning arises from social interaction" (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006, p. 213). Hallett and Ventresca (2006) note that institutional analysis has a "people problem" (p. 216) whereby individuals are trapped in constricting logics that they are purportedly unable to change. For the purposes of this work, human service employees are certainly shaped by preexisting institutional logics that are present in their environment, but they also interpret these logics through micro-interactions. In turn, they may shape and alter the logics, creating new logics in the process. Within organizations, "institutional logics combine with local, embedded meanings to produce particular variations of local action" (Binder, 2007, p. 551). In inhabited institutions, individuals and groups in organizations are interconnected and embedded within a series of meaning-making systems, which provides the context through which to adjust logics through micro-interactions (Binder, 2007; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006).

Recent works have heeded this call to incorporate more macro perspectives (Bertels & Lawrence, 2016; Binder, 2007; Everitt, 2012; Hallett, 2010; Reay & Hinings, 2009) although bringing micro-level analysis to institutional theory often has happened at the theoretical, rather than at the empirical level. By addressing institutional processes occurring at the micro-level, this project shows how human service organizational logics are altered at the individual level. Service providers work within a field where the institutional logics of abolitionism/abstinence and decriminalization/harm reduction are both in play, and are competing to prescribe different types of behaviors for service providers at all organizational levels.

### **Collaboration as a Mechanism to Address Institutional Complexity**

Collaboration is a mechanism through which institutionalization and institutional change can occur (Lawrence et al., 2002; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000; Reay & Hinings, 2009). Through these collaborative processes, individual actors can shape institutional fields, thus managing institutional complexity through the creation of collaborative networks. Individual identity plays a large role in collaboration among organizations (Maguire & Hardy, 2005), although individual identity is often deemphasized when discussing organizational collaboration. Organizations are made of individuals who may engage in what is termed ‘identity work,’ which is a way to construct an image of the self among social interactions, competing discourses, and conflicting demands, and will likely influence collaborative activity (Wright, Nyberg, & Grant, 2012, p. 1454).

The personal identity of human service managers is important in determining the types of strategies that they use to undertake their work. Maguire and Hardy (2005), in their work on collaborative strategies between community organizations and pharmaceutical companies involved in Canadian HIV/AIDS treatment, note that the strategy of collaboration is dependent

upon the way in which managers reflect upon their personal identity. Collaboration strategy is an area whereby individual interactions among those with different backgrounds and organizations result in identity issues becoming highly salient (Maguire & Hardy, 2005). Maguire and Hardy found that individuals were able to use particular categories of their identity (whether or not they were living with HIV, whether or not they were involved in activism, whether or not they were a volunteer vs. a paid employee, etc.) in a way to both speak for their constituency, as well as to their potential collaborative partners (p. 35). In this study, it may be important whether or not a person holds an identity as a current or former sex worker, or a person who may identify with issues around sex work (such as undocumented persons or LGBTQ persons).

In their work on collaboration, Reay and Hinings (2009) note that competing logics co-exist, and conflicting discourse between logics can be managed through creating collaborative relationships. In their work on the Alberta Health Care system, they sought to understand how actors carried out their every day work during a long-term competition between two competing logics: the incumbent logic (medical professionalism) and the challenger logic (business-like health care). Actors were able to manage these competing logics where “collaborators maintain their independence but work together to achieve a desired outcome” (p. 645). Similar to the work conducted by Reay and Hinings (2009), this research examines collaborations between organizations in a field with multiple competing logics, and focuses attention on the actions of individual actors, and macro-level institutional change. Reay and Hinings conclude that through “pragmatic collaborations” (p. 647) actors could work together even when their organizations abided by competing logics. Although the logics of “medical professionalism” vs. “business-like health care” do not carry the same moral and ideological weight as do the competing practice logics around sex work, there is a possibility that these service provision logics may be altered

through a similar process of effective and sustained collaboration that starts at the level of the individual. Individual actors may be utilizing logics that may be divergent from their organization, or may be trying to combine logics from multiple sources in an effort to appease proponents of both logics.

### **Organizations Responding to Institutional Complexity: Explanation of Categories**

The first research question in this chapter asks how human service nonprofits have responded to the institutional complexity of policies surrounding sex work. To answer the first question, I identify the logics that organizations may work under when addressing their work with individuals in the sex trade (specifically, abolitionism and decriminalization). I begin this section by categorizing organizations as to which logic they seem to follow based on public statements and interviews. Table 1 shows the categories of each of the organizations. I find that most HSNPs do not explicitly abide by one of these logics (typically because they do not consider sex workers as a primary client population).

TABLE 1: ORGANIZATIONAL LOGICS AROUND SEX WORK

	<b><u>Abolitionist- Dominant</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Decriminalization- Challenger</u></b>
N	7	27	4
Example Organizations Reflected	Gender Based Violence, Health Care, Homelessness, Legal Services, Sex Trafficking, Youth Services	Gender Based Violence, HIV/AIDS, Immigration, Health and Mental Health Care, Homelessness, Individuals in the Sex Trade, LGBTQ services, Poverty, Substance Use	Legal Services, LGBT Services, Substance Use, Youth in the Sex Trade
Practice Ideology	Abstinence oriented, or if organization practices harm reduction, does so according to a “gradualist” approach (see Chapter 1 for a definition).	Varying levels of harm reduction.	Harm reduction: organizations in this category have been described as “harm reduction radicals”.
Collaborative Relationships	Typically collaborates heavily with End Demand, or is part of the End Demand Coalition.	May collaborate with End Demand organizations, with SWOP, or with both groups.	All challenger organizations interview have collaborated with SWOP.

### **Abolitionist-Dominant Organizations**

The abolitionist-dominant logic was identified among seven out of the thirty-eight organizations. These organizations represent a range of nonprofit types: three of the seven organizations receive some government funding, and three of the seven have budgets of over one million. What primarily characterizes this approach is the organization’s stated opposition to the sex trade, advancing discourses that equate sex work with exploitation and wanting to hold the sex trade accountable for many of the adverse events in their clients’ lives. These organizations are often service agency partners with End Demand. While the abolitionist approach is associated with abstinence-oriented policies, I show in this section how some respondents at

these organizations have incorporated harm reduction language to respond to some of the critiques made about their association with abolitionism, thus (somewhat) addressing the institutionally complex environment in which they are working.

Service agencies have the reputation of treating sex workers as victims, and social workers in particular have been critiqued for advancing this discourse (Bromfield, 2015; Dewey & St. Germain, 2016; Musto, 2016; Wahab, 2002). Opponents of the abolitionist approach argue that it not only fails to acknowledge the complex realities of why individuals enter sex work, but also advances a propensity for social and moral control of participants in the social service system. As mentioned in Chapter 4, recent ethnographic work by Musto (2016) and Dewey and St. Germain (2016) provide evidence for how the social services and criminal justice systems collude to provide services for sex workers. I find that staff at these organizations are aware of competing logics that challenge the way in which victim-centered service delivery is provided. However, staff members at seven organizations still argued that sex work is a form of violence even if not *explicitly* coerced, and consider all sex work to be a form of coercion, or “an exploitation of their labor and sexuality.” For this respondent, who works at an organization that helps women in the sex trade, there is typically an invocation of past trauma and substance use that is involved when discussing a person’s participation in sex work:

“It takes a long time to get people to a point of acceptance of what trafficking is, and a perception of trafficking. It takes a lot of courage for people to then pursue the person, you know, legally pursue someone [their trafficker] who they might be afraid of is hard, and it might be easier to just kind of go on with your life, or go somewhere else and start a new life essentially. And at the same time, a lot of women have past sexual abuse, just historical sexual abuse and molestation. And from that, they might start at a young age, just being exposed and then there’s a lot of substance abuse, a lot of mental illness. So there’s a lot of comorbidities that go along with it, and you never know whether it’s the chicken or the egg

like did I start using drugs because I was molested? Did I use the drugs or alcohol, you know, to kind of help me not feel anymore?

This respondent uses her description of trauma to help her understand why a person may not want to pursue the trafficking, something that was echoed by many respondents in this category. Another respondent, from an organization that sought to rescue women and girls from the sex trade, spoke similarly about the effect of trauma and substance use, even going back to a consideration of circumstances prior to birth:

“...these girls have lived very difficult lives. It’s totally unfair, and we look at it from a perspective of, you know, the average age is now 11 or 12 of entering into the trade, and your brain hasn’t even formed then, and you’re coming from a state of complete normlessness where your mission is to sell yourself right? And that’s what’s reinforced here, so we start there and that is, every aspect of what we do is victim centered [services] looking at the person as a very traumatized individual. The brain hasn’t even developed yet and they may have been involved in something [like] Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, in the womb and so we want to make sure that everything that we do from top to bottom has that in perspective long term and we understand that if you’re brainwashed to that extent, you’re 12 years of age and that’s how you see yourself.”

For this and other respondents in this category, it is unfathomable that someone would choose to be involved in the sex trade, and thus they often refer to trauma and abuse as a mechanism through which women and girls become involved. The fact that these women and girls have experienced trauma and abuse is inextricable from forced trafficking—thus they often discuss trauma as a, if not the primary mechanism for entry into the sex trade. So how does organizational staff, consisting of individuals that define sex work as a source of violence and trauma that should be abolished, manage the presence of the opposing challenger logic of decriminalization? One respondent, which held classes for sex trade involved women, noted that these classes were “a judgment-free zone.” She went on to note that, “for a lot of our services,

it's about harm reduction, meeting people where they are. And so if that's someone's belief system, then that's where you're going to start from, and you try to spend your own feelings or assessments about where somebody is. So if someone believes that's what they're doing, then that is where we start."

Some respondents at these organizations talked about the work that they were doing as a form of harm reduction, and talked about the provision of "harm reduction" services—which they took to mean the provision of services, without judgment, but with the eventual goal of helping them to get out of the sex trade. The form of harm reduction they are discussing, is an approach to harm reduction services referred to as "gradualism." This service approach is "centered on trying to create a therapeutic continuum that builds on the strengths of both the harm reduction and abstinence approaches, while trying to reduce their respective shortcomings" (Kellogg, 2003, p. 241). Gradualist practitioners are in favor of some of the principles of harm reduction, but only as it will eventually lead to abstinence from the behavior. While members of organizations that provide services according to a gradualist approach would likely not refer to themselves as "gradualist", they espouse thoughts on harm reduction (and in conjunction, sex work) that reflect their difficulty in combining their desire to not reject their clients progress outright. As one respondent who works at an organization serving individuals in prostitution noted about harm reduction:

"We're not harm reduction to the point of, our ultimate goal is to, like if say what would our ultimate success be, it is to be, you know, not have to deal with these things that are harming them in the first place. So we're harm reduction to a point. Some of the methods that we use, are okay, this is the ultimate goal for you, you have so many things that you're dealing with, so we're going to have little steps like one at a time. But sort of the, if you take harm reduction to the fullest extent, it's you know, so we're a little bit of a hybrid."



Unlike traditional abstinence only treatment centers,<sup>44</sup> respondents stated that the client is not denied help should they relapse: rather, they are encouraged, and it is hoped that they will come back and obtain treatment from the organization. The above quote indicates a classic gradualist approach to harm reduction—while harm reduction is a means towards abstinence, it should not be an end in and of itself—the “first and foremost goal” is to get the person “abstinent” from the sex trade. Gradualism is something that many harm reduction experts I have spoken to disagree with, yet some have noted that it can serve as a bridge between the abstinence and harm reduction service modalities (in an informal conversation, one respondent noted that gradualism could be considered a “harm reduction path toward harm reduction”) (Kellogg, 2003). Persons working at abolitionist organization are trying to reconcile their support of harm reduction policies, but only in a sense that it aligns with their concern that the sex trade is harmful, and that needs to be eradicated. This is not necessarily specific for organizations’ that advocate an abolitionist approach to sex work, but it is common among certain respondents trying to make sense of how they can work within a service system that simultaneously privileges harm reduction and the logic of abolitionism.

While respondents at these organizations acknowledged the importance of harm reduction (or what they believed to be harm reduction in their work), at least one respondent stated explicitly that they “don’t believe in the harm reduction model per se” but that they work with many organizations that are harm reduction focused, because “there may be a philosophical difference, but the implementation is just the same.” They went on to describe how they actually

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<sup>44</sup> It should be noted here that not a single respondent in this study indicated that they would refuse services to someone that continued to be involved in sex work during service provision. Even for those organizations that took an abolitionist approach, it was expected that the person would return to the trade at some point, and that they would always allow them to return to receive services regardless of current status in the sex trade.

anticipated negative behaviors, due to the extremely traumatized population that they are working with:

“we anticipate some ladies, who are manifesting, manifest their trauma in cutting themselves or eating disorders. Some of them return to their pimps...and from our perspective those aren't failures, that's expected behavior when you come from this scenario. When they run [from the organization] we go get them...not us physically, but I mean the law enforcement people that we work with and the local police, and the FBI. We know basically where they are at and we go get them and bring them back...we take them to [hospital], a partner of ours, where they will do an assessment of their psychological state and get them a little more care and stabilized and then they always have an invitation to come back to [organization] when that happens. It could be a week or two weeks, three weeks or a month, we don't care. They are always welcome back at [organization].”

In this institutionally complex environment, this particular respondent has acknowledged the importance of what he believed to be harm reduction, and has indicated that even though their service philosophy may be different, they have successfully worked with harm reduction organizations because the practice ends up being similar. In the following section, I will discuss organizations that would find the above “treatment” involving the local police and law enforcement completely antithetical to harm reduction practices.

### **Decriminalization-Challenger Organizations**

Organizations that can be identified as being on the “decriminalization-challenger” side of the debate are unlike those that are “abolitionist-dominant” in that they advance discourses that call for the decriminalization of sex work at minimum. One respondent referred to leaders of these organizations as “harm reduction radicals”, meaning that these are the individuals that practice and advocate for harm reduction even at the expense of their own organizational funding and legitimacy. These are the organizations that challenge (as an organization, not just as an individual) what they perceive as the hegemonic discourse of End Demand. I find that there were

only four organizations that actively advance this approach. Although these organizations are identified as more radically harm reduction oriented than most, two of the four organizations are almost entirely government funded—which may run contrary with what one may expect considering that the approach to sex work by the government has been one that favors abolitionism.

The following quote from an executive director of a harm reduction organization is representative of how members of this category talk about sex work as either a form of labor, or a form of survival, rather than focusing on the women’s personal history as we saw above:

...But if you're just targeting the john, you are targeting the livelihood of the sex worker. And from what I've seen it doesn't really play out that way. It's like, okay, you target the john, but the sex worker gets caught up in the mix too. You know, not only loses money, or a safe place to stay or whatever's going on, the intricacies also usually get picked up, for whatever, even if they don't get a felony charge, or trafficking charge or what have you.

For this respondent, criminalization of the john is not distinct from criminalization of the sex worker: either way, the sex worker would either be caught up in the criminal justice system as well, or lose access to resources. In service provision to this population, there is less emphasis on “client success”—for the clients of the abolitionist organizations mentioned above, the “success” would be exit from the sex trade. Directors at these organizations noted that there was no “standard client success” as “folks are individuals and they define their own successes.” One respondent, who works in substance use, with individuals who are in the sex trade, defines success as “any positive change, as the person defines it for themselves.” Some version of this quote was mentioned by each respondent from the decriminalization organizations, and noted that in their service provision, they would allow the client to drive the type of changes they want to see in their own lives. Another respondent reiterated how their organization, which served as a

drop-in center for homeless youth actually highlighted the experience of marginalized populations and anti-oppression modes of behavior, making that “a priority for the staff and the folks that we serve. So anti-oppression informs all of the decisions that we make, not just sexism, but sexism, racism, ableism, all of the isms, and the phobias, homophobia, transphobia, etc...and a lot of places say that on paper, but maybe don’t necessarily enact it, and I would say that this place is one of the few places that I’ve worked with that anti-oppression is really central to what they do.” In regards to the sex trade, no staff at these organizations would prioritize removal from the sex trade *unless* this was also a priority of the client.

As some directors of the abolitionist organizations described what they do as “harm reduction,” the directors from decriminalization organizations counter that point, with one respondent noting that harm reduction, in the context of working with individuals under the age of 18 in the sex trade “is tricky.” She noted that “I’m not sure exactly how much I’m allowed to say on that to be completely honest with you (laughs), but yeah, I would say that we definitely try to help everyone navigate that, whatever that looks like, but because of the some of the anti-trafficking laws, that’s the reason why I can’t really go into detail...but it does impact our work, I can say it does make it harder to do our work.” Another respondent, who had led a social justice organization for youth in the sex trade (ages 12-24) until 2013, noted that anti-trafficking End Demand policies were specifically harmful for the youth involved in their organization:

Well, here is the thing—I mean there is two things that would happen [when we would try to influence policy and legislation] like the first thing was like, when we were upset about End Demand, and they had some politics around listening to the people who were impacted, so when we were upset they wanted to hear why we were upset. So then they just started adopting our language so that it sounded different so it became more confusing for the general public to kind of understand. Like for example, I once heard them talk about [End Demand] as a harm reduction strategy, no, you know what I mean? That is exactly what it isn't.

When End Demand had all of their wins...Hull House decided to hold a forum on the sex trade...the important part of this story is that people from [organization] said “I just want you to speak a little bit to the fact that people can– that you are increasing the likelihood of young people being charged with a felony for practicing harm reduction or for–really even having friendships or living together”, and one of the End Demand folks laughed and was like “Oh, silly, the police are not going to be–that is not the way the law is written, the police are not going to be doing that” and then a lawyer stood up, who we did not know and said “actually that’s exactly the way the law is written and that is exactly what it will do. Then she was just like “but that is not the spirit and that is not what the officers mean to be doing” and we were like “there you go, there it all is,” is that recorded...that is exactly in a nutshell where the disconnect lies is that these are a group of people who are mostly not impacted, who are mostly privileged, who believe that the law is there to serve their purposes and then have no understanding of a way the law actually applies to individuals in communities who do not share their privilege.

In this exchange, the respondent speaks to some of the anti-trafficking legislation that would increase penalties on pimping with fear that this legislation would harm youth working together (for example, if a 17 year old and a 19 year old are working together, the 19 year old could be charged with pimping and/or pandering for working with a minor). According to the respondent, this type of anti-trafficking legislation makes it more difficult for organizations that work with youth in the street-based economies to practice their work their work safely, and fails to protect the population against harm conducted by law enforcement. Even if anti-trafficking legislation is created with no intention of harming those involved in the sex trade, directors at decriminalization organizations note that the assumption that all sex work is a form of trafficking results in disproportionate involvement with the criminal justice system, which can be harmful to their participants and antithetical to harm reduction.

In discussing this opposition (both at the service level, and at the policy level) against End Demand among these organizations, there may be (and has been) room for collaboration

between decriminalization and abolitionist organizations. I spoke with the director of a well-known harm reduction organization (and one of the organizations advocating for decriminalization) about an outreach collaboration they had with a religious organization in the 1990s, which I touched upon in Chapter 4. He noted that...some of the staff was “staunch abstentionist 12-steppers, but when there were harm reductionists they appeared on the front lines.” He then said that instead of the “we’re trying to get women out of sex work” they had [different] ideas, you know, here’s a place to live...they didn’t really guide [clients] in their direction”. He went on to note that “we tend not to connect with places that are moralistic or absolute dogmatists” but would work with them “if they can at least not get in the way of our assisting in causing positive change.” Thus, for this organization, collaboration is possible even with organizations that hold an opposing logic regarding service provision. Organizations may espouse contradictory beliefs, yet there is a possibility for overlap in the way services are provided—this overlap may be just enough for individuals to put aside opposing logics and provide necessary basic need services. On the one hand, it is unlikely that through such “strange bedfellow” collaborations organizations will change their mission, or the basic tenets of how they intend to provide services. On the other hand, there is evidence here of individual front line service staff altering the way in which the organization provides their services as a result of the integration of the new logics of harm reduction.<sup>45</sup> While top-down institutional logics provide organizations with the “raw materials and guidelines of social interactions” (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006 p. 213), organizations consist of individuals, who may alter the institutional logics in their own image, getting assistance from other individuals along the way. In the following sections I turn increasingly toward the focus on the individual, and discuss the way in

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<sup>45</sup> Being that this collaboration began in the 1990s, harm reduction was indeed a new service logic at this time.

which individuals within nonprofits are responding to this institutional complexity in this environment.

### **“Neutral” Organizations and Institutional Logics**

The previous two sections discuss organizations that promote a largely unified logic around sex work, which is maintained by the respondents that I interviewed. While there might be minor differences in nuance around perceptions of sex work, the larger end goal remains the same for respondent and organization. The following section discusses employees at organizations that do not follow a particular logic around sex work—the “neutral” category. Consequently, these organizations rely even more on the beliefs of individual staff members, as well as individual relationships between staff and members of advocacy organizations. While individuals working at the abolitionist and decriminalization organizations certainly have agency within their organization, I do not include them in this section because the logics that employees at these organizations hold are likely to be a precondition for working at the organization, and they are not trying to change the logics of their organization (at least not in this context). While there may be some individual differences in service provision, it is highly unlikely that someone who personally advocates for the decriminalization of sex work would seek employment at an organization that strongly advocates for End Demand and vice versa (this is notwithstanding any personal changes in logics over the course of employment). Furthermore, in my study, I find that all of the staff members who worked at those organizations held beliefs that were in line with the logics adopted by the organization they worked for. What makes the neutral organizations ripe for study is their vast responsibility for service provision to sex workers, combined with their relative silence on issues concerning sex work. However, although the *organizations* do not follow a particular logic when it comes to sex work, some employees are working to change that

from within the organization—often with a focus on support of decriminalization. With a total of 11 agencies taking a direct stance on sex work and sex trafficking in this project, this leaves 27 agencies that are not taking a direct stance: at least *not as an organization*. I refer to these organizations as “neutral” in quotation marks: as the organization itself may be neutral around sex work, respondents are less likely to be neutral. While these service employees are more likely to indicate nuanced opinions around sex work, there is no shortage of strong opinions on the topic which has influenced the way in which they have may have engaged with advocacy organizations.

In Table 2 below, I note how *individual respondents* working at each of the neutral organizations make sense of the competing logics of abolitionism and decriminalization. Of the twenty-seven organizations in this category, two are in the abolitionist-dominant category, eleven remain neutral, while fifteen are in the decriminalization-challenger category.



TABLE 2: RESPONDENT LOGICS AROUND SEX WORK<sup>46</sup>

	<b><u>Abolitionist- Dominant</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Decriminalization- Challenger</u></b>
N	2	12	15
Criteria	<p>Respondent feels strongly about the eradication of prostitution, as evidenced through their locus of blame on clients of sex workers. Instead of criminalizing the sex worker, seek to rehabilitate them through provision of human services.</p> <p>Although they may abide by a harm reduction approach, when working with individuals in the sex trade, the ultimate goal is to get the person to leave the trade. On Harm Reduction survey, typically answered Agree or Strongly Agree to question #15, advocating the shutdown of online spaces for sex workers to advertise.</p>	<p>Respondent generally feels that the sex trade has a negative effect on their clients, but are concerned that the criminal justice implications of End Demand policies (i.e. shutting down online services, arresting clients of sex workers) may not be advantageous.</p> <p>Would often reluctantly answer question #15 in the Harm Reduction Survey (either Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or a refusal to answer), expressing discomfort with having to address the shutting down of online spaces where sex worker advertise.</p>	<p>Respondent feels strongly about establishing rights for sex workers and takes a positive or neutral approach to the sex trade. Resolutely believes social services for sex workers should not be focused on getting the worker out of the sex trade if that is not what they want, and believe that any increased criminalization (on client of sex worker or sex worker is harmful). Often expressed surprise, or mirth at the Harm Reduction Survey questions, as they found the questions to be “obvious” for someone that would claim to practice harm reduction. Always answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree to question #15, disavowing the efficacy of shutting down online spaces where sex workers advertise.</p>

<sup>46</sup> As I interviewed forty people from thirty-eight organizations, there are two more respondents than there are organizations.

TABLE 2, CONTINUED

	<b>Example Quotes</b>	<b>Example Quotes</b>	<b>Example Quotes</b>
	<p>I mean, it depends, from my perspective again just based on hearing from our clients, there isn't a lot of benefit to sex work being legal really... There's a lot of violence associated with what they do, and what I hear from our clients, they've experienced a lot of violence in that interaction.</p>	<p>But [sex work and sex trafficking] is tricky because there are very different definitions of what coercion is and I would say like the, the cracks of the sort of issue is what is coercion ... But like, um, I think that, you know, it [sex work] can be a choice people are making and people deserved the dignity to be able to make that choice then.</p>	<p>I can't name names, but a lot of housing programs specifically will kick people out if they find out about sex work, a lot of places just make people feel judged or pressured to leave. We have also groups for trans women for example that we have regularly here, and we definitely hear, talk a lot about sex work and people's decision making process and what that looks like, and reasons people want to stay, and reasons people leave, and why all of those choices are valid.</p>
	<p>I look at like, my daughter and think it all in my mind how I would want somebody to explain to her at some point that equal to going to college to be an engineer, a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, whatever you wanna be, there goes the option of the sex trade industry. And, in fact it was as legitimate as it was, why don't we have any career advancement and/or these other things.</p>	<p>So survival sex I think is one thing that puts our young people at increased risk for disease and physical harm. Puts them at great risk for abuse. I think it means you need to have an incredibly flexible staff that is willing to work with people where they're at at the time... I don't think that for a lot of our young people it puts them into the sex worker for lifetime kind of thing, or the trafficking thing, I don't think that that's it, I think it really is about the survival, by exchanging the sex in exchange for a place to be for the evening.</p>	<p>But most of us, all of us I think, firmly believe in the decriminalization of sex work and want to support that, but because we're a federally funded program, we can't make overt political statements like challenging sex work as something that's illegal. But like looking at studies like having sex work decriminalized and access to care for sex workers and these destigmatization efforts really decrease HIV prevalence, we know that. It was really hard to work with those tensions. So our idea was like use stigma as standings. So our project was to fight sex workers stigma.</p>

TABLE 2, CONTINUED

	<p>I know that within the advocacy community there is tension around the criminalization of johns piece...Because there is concern that we would be criminalizing men of color...The needs of victims always get downplayed to the, oh we can't do that because it will further stigmatize communities of color...but why are we putting the needs of victims of the sex trade below the needs of this other population?</p>	<p>So, that's like, and on a practical level, we don't actually have any official stance on prostitution per se... But I think it's because it's, so when I think about it, it's you know, if a person really does want to choose prostitution, like sex work or any of the names that someone might call it, that's like a different issue for us. Because what we're trying to do is trying to help people that don't have as many options. Like, I guess for some of our folks, like they do sex work, but the reason they're having to do it in the way that they are is because they have all of these other factors affecting them.</p>	<p>I think with sex work and harm reduction we're probably all aligned. Where I think in general we're a fairly sex positive group...I would not be worried that people would seek to intervene and restrict people's ability to engage in sex work, I think there's, my sense is that there's a strong consensus among the people we work with that um, people engage in sex work and survival sex for a variety of different reasons, and people are the experts in their own experience, and we need to support people however they request to be supported in navigating those things.</p>
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***Individual Respondents Working at Neutral Organizations***

The ways in which individuals did not uniformly adopt organizational logics became clear as respondents became visibly uncomfortable with my request during interviews that they “answer according to the organization.” Quite a few respondents did not know how to respond to that, and several informed me that, quite frankly “they could not answer on behalf of the organization,” which surprised me, considering the high management level that all of my respondents held in the organization. The controversy around sex work, and the different logics around sex work made some respondents appear to be uncomfortable that they would state the wrong thing, or would say something that could possibly offend me. On the contrary,

respondents were very quick to answer questions about their organization around mental illness, social justice and drug use (even if they did not specifically work with substance users or the mentally ill).

Respondents noting possible solutions of decriminalization and legalization often gave a hat tip to End Demand policies, noting that those solutions could also be important, but also felt they should be tempered with acknowledgement that the End Demand conception of sex work may not fit everyone's experiences. It should also be noted that a minority of these respondents had relationships with both SWOP and End Demand, and were fearful of offending either group in their response, and thus tried their best to remain neutral on this topic by combining the logics, as this executive director of a youth homeless agency does below:

So I think that both policies [End Demand and full decriminalization] are good and important, but I think that the arresting the johns doesn't really get to the issue though. It's a symptom of it. I think the latter policy which certainly we've heard about, which is legalizing it, decriminalizing it, or you know, this idea of like, um, it's one thing if you're a pimp or a madam, organizing ten people, maybe that's criminal. But if you're just doing it for yourself, like your own personal use of marijuana versus your intent to distribute, then maybe it's a ticket. Or completely decriminalized. So I absolutely think that that's empowering and that that would make a difference in terms of, reducing the amount of violence, of victimization that sex workers would be exposed to. And I would actually think that it actually empowers them, because it would give them opportunity to choose more freely who, when, and how, as opposed to having to operate at the black-market level.

By comparing sex work to another illegal activity, marijuana use, this respondent reflected upon the different levels of involvement in sex work: if you are in sex work for yourself, just as if you are using marijuana for yourself, this should be decriminalized so that one does not have to rely on the black market. Another respondent spoke similarly, mentioning the benefits of relying on both logics:

“I mean, we do struggle [with conceptions of sex work] because the work that we do specifically is working with sexual violence. And we know statistically speaking, many people who are abused as minors, sometimes fall into this trap because they leave an abusive home, and then predators are out there and sort of, kind of funnel of them into this field [the sex trade]. But I've heard the flip side of it, people who say, I don't have any abuse in my history, I'm doing this because I want to do this, and who are you to say, that I shouldn't be able to...to generalize, or use a broad brush stroke for everybody, it's a little broad, and think that the more that we work with the population, the more we're exposed to different things.”

In interpreting this quote, there is a dissonance between the manager's idea of sexual violence, and their concern that they may be generalizing experiences' of sex work that may not fit the traditional conception of a victim of violence. This respondent, who identified as a Latina and worked primarily with a Latinx population, acknowledged that their organization, which works with survivors of gender-based violence, had gained knowledge through both their work with End Demand, as well as their work with SWOP, and found both of these solutions (abolitionism and decriminalization) adequate for working with their population. However, being that many of their clients were undocumented, the respondent's tendency was to avoid work with law enforcement: something that is often encouraged by organizations advocating abolitionism. So while these organizations may acknowledge the importance of both policy logics—their way in which they described their service provision practices appear to favor what decriminalization proponents would want.

Indeed, there were certainly respondents that were very clear about their own personal service beliefs. For example, the respondent below, who is a manager of a youth- oriented program within a large health services organization, discusses a conflict between themselves and the organization in the implementation of the End Demand model:

Yeah, sure. So for me, I don't personally, as a person-activist, I don't think that the model of criminalizing one and not criminalizing the other is productive, because I am very anti-

prisons, and prisons are, I think we're seeing in America that prisons are failing. I think that putting bodies in cells and leaving them there to rot, doesn't work. As an organization? We would support that policy change, because we know that young people are being trafficked, or engaging in sex work may not be fully aware of the parameters of that work, and we think they should not be penalized for trying to survive. Others, who may be taking advantage of those systems, um, maybe adults who might be accessing services from young people under age, is illegal, and the organization would support those state laws. So we have to make sure that those [laws] are functioning still, so if that brings upon a penalty of that person we would support that, so long as the wellbeing of the young person is still there. So that's probably the difference between myself and the organization.

Here, the respondent articulated both his response to criminalization of buyers and sellers of sexual services (strongly against due to his perception of the failures of prisons and the criminal justice system), and the response of the organization he worked for (generally supportive of criminalization of buyers of sexual services, so long as the wellbeing of the young person is intact). Later in the interview, the respondent said that if it were up to him, there would be an adolescent sex work unit, specifically for young people engaged in survival sex—they felt that the involvement of the criminal justice system for this particular population was unnecessary and often increased harm for this population. This respondent is personally in agreement with decriminalization discourse, and have tried to find ways of incorporating their own logics into their organization, which is hesitant to take a position on sex work. This person identified as a queer person of color, and mentioned that some of the individuals that work in their organization have been engaged in sex work in some capacity—and there has been substantial overlap between employees at their organization, and more radical gender justice and LGBTQ organizations (including SWOP). This brings into light the necessity of looking at how individuals within organizations, and not just organizations as a whole, manage competing logics within an institutionally complex environment. To address this complexity, it is necessary that

we assess how individual interactions between individuals at human service and advocacy organizations are largely responsible for the phenomenon of incremental changes in logics at human service nonprofits; often privileging the decriminalization and harm reduction logics.

### **Micro-interactions Altering Institutional Logics Through Collaborative Processes**

The second question in this chapter asks how micro-interactions can maintain or alter institutional logics through collaborative activities. As established in prior chapters of this dissertation, advocacy organizations, including End Demand organizations and SWOP, develop strong relationships with individuals at human service nonprofits to establish organizational support for their logics around sex work. How is it, then, that individuals at these organizations respond? Do they try to modify their organization's logics through these collaborations?

An institutional logics approach would predict that organizations would be guided by multiple top-down logics in the field. These logics, in turn, would be "taken-for granted" and dictate organizational activity (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). However, in considering the idea of inhabited institutions in a field of institutional complexity, we can see how, through social interactions, institutional logics are interpreted in each of the organizations. In this section, I reflect upon how individuals are affecting the adoption of specific logics, focusing upon individuals (who are taking all logics) at those organizations that have taken a "neutral" stance in regards to sex work. Here I discuss first the logics of individuals at agencies that have *not* take a public stance on sex work, followed by organizations that have indicated acceptance of both abolitionist and decriminalization logics. I refer to both of these individual categories as neutral, as the organization itself does not abide by a specific logic.

#### ***Individuals Working At Service Agencies Without Preexisting Logics on Sex Work***

For individual respondents working within the sex work and sex trafficking field, efforts to challenge the hegemonic abolitionist logic has required some creativity. Many respondents report that the decriminalization logic (which aligns more with harm reduction) fits their clients' needs better than abolitionism, but have been unsure how (or whether) to publicly support the policy of decriminalization. What some respondents have expressed interest in, is essentially adopting new service logics and meaning around sex work, where none had existed previously (at least not within their organization). For instance, respondents have expressed interest in learning how to provide services to sex workers, in a non-judgmental manner, without assuming that the ultimate goal would be for the client to leave the sex trade. When I spoke to a clinical director of a homeless service agency about the organization's views on sex work, she stated:

So, I'm saying these things to you as, like, my person, and not as, like, the representative of [organization]. Although, I think that my co-workers probably feel the same...I have my own thoughts about criminalization of substances, and the way sex work is in enforced. ...I think the idea [around sex work] is complicated. But I don't know, I think the criminalization of the buyer assumes that the person who is not at fault is a victim. So, I don't necessarily, I don't think criminalization of any kind helps in any way.

In addition to describing her own perspectives on sex work, she went on to note her concern that her organization had traditionally been seen as a second wave organization (as in, they were perceived as being against sex work), and that she and another staff member had been working to move the organization in a different direction, incrementally adopting new logics with this population. She noted that her and another high level staff member had been uncomfortable with the way in which their employees were working with their participants, and thought that SWOP might be a good resource for helping staff to rethink how they were serving their participants:

So, my health services coordinator and I coordinated a training from SWOP, although I was tragically out of town for the actual training. She does a lot of our health-related stuff particularly harm



reduction stuff around "safer sex". She had a conversation with a staff member where she was honestly feeling a little uncomfortable about how they [staff members] were seeing their participants. Kind of like as victims I guess. I felt similarly, I feel like their understanding of this is a little bit skewed and I would like this staff member to have more information, and I felt like "I'm not a person to give it to them." So, we reached out to SWOP and they came to do a training for all of our clinical staff on sex work and it was mandatory for the whole team. Then, we actually started a partnership with SWOP where they came out and did the legal clinic at our organization.

For this and other respondents, trainings from SWOP deepened their relationship with the organization, and helped them address hesitations that some of their staff held around services to sex workers. Moreover, it allowed some directors, sympathetic with SWOP's policy stance to provide context for staff that may be less knowledgeable on issues confronting individuals in the sex trade. Another respondent noted that similarly, the mental health organization she worked for did not take an explicit stance on sex work, but having a training from SWOP allowed her to advocate for a reframing with how the organization thought about their work with sex workers. She noted that her organization "did not take a specific stance on sex work" which she felt could be because sex workers "weren't a significant percentage of the client population". However, she also described how it was possible that this "could be bidirectional, it could be as much because we haven't been doing more work in it, so some people might not disclose, and that being said...I think sometimes that folks would disclose in the context of individual therapy and maybe that it wouldn't necessarily become known organizationally." As a clinical director at the organization, she described how she realized that while her organization had historical roots in serving the LGBT community, their response to concerns around sex work were lacking, and so she brought SWOP in to do a training (and they have done several since). To illustrate what led to the training at the organization, she described how this collaboration began: "it happened, and it was really fortunate that one of the co-creators of SWOP came here to do a post graduate

training program, and really informed us about the organization...as she was leaving she helped us create a collaboration with SWOP, and then we asked them to do a training with us.” This training, she said:

“helped us to be much more thoughtful and intentional with regards to the people that we are working with. Not making any assumptions about their experience in sex work, and we should in some ways know that already because we apply that lens to so many areas of our focus, but it was really useful to us to think about why we make the assumptions that we do but, especially in regards to folks involved in sex work.”

Here, the SWOP member articulates how the interaction between a member of this nonprofit with a founding member of SWOP influenced the meaning and enactment of a particular institutional logic around sex work. The respondent I spoke to at this organization noted that while the organization had not yet been a part of an advocacy campaign around prostitution, many of the individual members had started incorporating advocacy for decriminalization in their personal lives, many of whom find parallels between sex work and their work with LGBTQ persons.

SWOP is aware of their ability to influence individual employees as one member states:

“we do give trainings to organizations that may have negative, or conflicting views of sex workers...I think these trainings have made a difference [in how they perceive sex work], simply based on the expansion of the PROS network, we’ve been getting more and more inquiries with people wanting us to speak at their organization, or partner with them, and I mean I think that what’s happening is that you get twenty people in a room, who don’t really have a position on something, and you provide a message that is really non-polarizing, and that is also logically coherent, from groups that are coerced into the sex trade, to people that engage in survival sex...if people don’t already come in with a strong opinion, then they leave those spaces supportive of our position.”

Here, the board member elucidates how SWOP, by providing a “non-polarizing” and “logically coherent” message is able to reach individuals that were either skeptical of SWOP, or perhaps even antagonistic. Through reaching individuals in these trainings, they have been able to connect with the broader population of human service organizations.

One respondent, who worked with undocumented individuals at an adult education organization, found parallels between the work they were doing on behalf of their population, and the work that SWOP was doing on behalf of sex workers through a public training that SWOP did with members of the human service provider community. While the organization itself does not take a stance on sex work, they are an adult education organization that works primarily with undocumented persons, and the respondent perceived some similarities between the negative perceptions of being referred to as “illegal” among both sex workers, and undocumented populations. He noted that the fear of police is probably similar between both communities, which is why he felt an affinity towards SWOP. The respondent, who worked as the organization’s advocacy director, informed me that SWOP:

“...came to the adult school to talk about sex workers during our module of work and labor...for our community members, it was very liberating to have somebody that was taking a lot of the stereotypes, a lot of the institutionalized discrimination that they fear for the profession and I think overall, it went really well for them to be exposed to this new perspective. This individual that came and presented her life experience to them...and yeah, I just think it was really interesting and we’re going to replicate that year in the laboring module.”

Although this respondent did not specifically work with sex workers, they were able to connect the experiences of sex workers, with the experience of being undocumented, as both populations are stigmatized as the result of some individuals and groups referring to them as “illegal.” So when individuals at certain human service nonprofits bring SWOP into the organization to

discuss strategies for working with individuals in the sex trade, attendees at the training will often leave with SWOP's position, and may take this back to their organization.

### ***Individuals at Service Agencies Holding Competing Logics***

The previous section discussed organizations without clear logics around sex work. Other organizations (and staff within these organizations) hold competing logics—that is, they have indicated acceptance of both End Demand policies and policies focused on decriminalization. This could be because the organization collaborates with both End Demand organizations and SWOP—or it could be because the organization provides services to sex workers, yet find their work at a crossroads between abolitionist and decriminalization logics. Some respondents employed at these organizations were content with supporting both End Demand and SWOP, often careful in their language to not disparage the opposing side, or trying to seek solutions that have combined the two approaches. Other respondents were concerned about their organization's support of abolitionist policies, and sought to bring in outside perspectives (primarily SWOP, but other decriminalization and social justice groups as well) to educate members of their organization more on the benefits of decriminalization.

A few respondents at organizations that collaborated with both End Demand and SWOP were aware that by collaborating with one side, they risked losing the respect of the other. However, they felt that their dedication to their primary client base was of utmost importance, and insisted that both abolitionist and decriminalization logics could benefit their population. As one respondent that worked at a gender based violence organization noted:

**Respondent:** “We work quite a bit with all legal systems. We work with the Chicago Police Department. We work with many hospital systems here in Chicago, and then we work with Chicago Public Schools systems as well...we were on the Steering Committee with the End Demand, and we still have a close relationship with CAASE and they are one of our referral

partners...but they are not our only partners. We also work with SWOP and have events with SWOP, discussions with SWOP, we're on the PROS network as you know, so we try to balance those relationships.”

**Interviewer:** That's really interesting because they don't really agree on certain issues.

**Respondent:** No, and I think if they had it their way, we would probably pick one or the other, and that's not what we're going to do. We try to come from the framework of what can we do to best help victims of sexual violence. That's how we look at it and we know that CAASE is helping survivors of sexual violence, and SWOP is helping. As far as the philosophical differences between the organizations, we have a little bit tried to distance ourselves from that since that's not the primary mission of our organization and we know that both parties are doing some work to support specifically people that have experienced violence.

This respondent summarizes her work at an organization that in a sense is “caught” in-between the competing logics, and has managed to successfully maintain relationships with both groups by distancing themselves from the philosophical narratives, and focusing on the abilities of both organizations to work on issues of sexual assault and domestic violence. As we ended the interview, she took me out to the front of the office, and pointed to their presentation of literature and brochures from other organizations. She laughed and directed my attention to two brochures, and noted: “Look, there’s a SWOP brochure, right next to the CAASE brochure.”

Several months after this interview, I attended a SWOP presentation at this organization-- a member of SWOP was invited to present at the organization by the respondent I interviewed. At the training, some respondents had heard of SWOP—but many indicated that they had not. At the end of the training, the majority of attendees had pledged support for decriminalization, with several persons asking specifically how they could support decriminalization in their own work. Others approached the SWOP member after the training, asking how they could support SWOP’s work, whether it was through a collaboration of a therapy group, passing out SWOP brochures

and flyers at events, or helping SWOP with street outreach. No one at the presentation spoke up to challenge the concept of decriminalization, and nearly all attendees asked questions in a manner that was supportive. This harkens back to an earlier quote by a board member of SWOP—if you put together a logically consistent argument to a group of people who may not come in with a strong opinion, they may leave supportive of your position. Importantly, this anecdote provides a means to go below the surface of what the respondent at this gender based violence organization told me during our interview; although she expressed support for both End Demand and SWOP, it was SWOP that she had invited to do a training to her staff who emerged strongly supportive of decriminalization. I had seen her at several events that SWOP had, and she provided expert knowledge of gender-based violence at these events. While this certainly does not mean that she has completely eschewed support from organizations involved in End Demand, there is some acknowledgement that she could be exerting efforts on bringing in decriminalization advocates to move the organizational away from their support of abolitionism.

Showing support for decriminalization in a less tacit manner, another manager noted that while she (and the section of the multi-service agency she worked for) was enthusiastically in favor of decriminalization for sex work and drug use, the organization as a whole she considered (to her dismay) to be on the fence between abolitionist End Demand policies and decriminalization policies—it is a large organization, with multiple departments serving different populations. As a result of a friendship with a current SWOP member, she found out that her organization was a member of End Demand, to which she responded “Fuuuuck,” as she herself was not aware of the organization’s involvement in and support of End Demand policies. So she asked a policy director about their organization’s involvement in End Demand, and asked whether or not “we could get SWOP at the table”. Her question about SWOP went unanswered

by the director, but they told her “the reason why we're at the table is so that we have a way to influence, so we have a voice of reason here.” The respondent then noted that “we're not advocating on behalf of End Demand, we're trying to make sure it's not the worst case scenario....it's better to be at the table than to let them crash all on their own, even if we're not loving it.” So, what she wants from her relationship with SWOP is for “someone from SWOP is to keep me apprised when issues come up, that I can then take it to the rest of the organization so we can collect ammo that will help us push our board over the edge and begin to officially take steps to support this [policy of decriminalization]”. For this respondent, SWOP will help her address possible issues with End Demand policies, which she can then promote to the board of the organization, possibly influencing them to support decriminalization policies.

Another person I spoke to had significant experience working with LGBTQ individuals that were victims of trafficking, or engaged in survival sex—she had been involved with multiple organizations across the city of Chicago in her years of being a service provider. She was a highly sought after public speaker on issues of LGBTQ youth (and identified as queer herself), and she was also engaged with collaborations with SWOP, and collaborations with End Demand, but did not see this as a contradictory arrangement. She was highly tapped into the LGBT community in Chicago and noted that she had done a great deal of work with Anita Alveraz’s state’s attorney’s office, an office that, as mentioned in Chapter 4, had been promoting End Demand policies:

“So I had been a part of [LGBTQ organization], which was a sub grantee on a Cook County State’s Attorney’s grant related to human trafficking and specifically the CSEC (*Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*) portion...Because it’s just that LGBTQ youth end up involved in, you know, trading sex for survival and more formal sex work, things like that, high homelessness, high family rejection, high, all the things that end up providing for those kind of situations where people are figuring out how to make their

way in the world. And so us [organization and CAASE] were partners on a specific CSEC grant if I remember. So that state's attorney's office applied for a federal CSEC grant which involved provider training and then I was also part of a human trafficking task force through this."

In the case of this respondent, the human trafficking task was a crucial source of support for her organization's primary population of homeless and sex-trade involved youth. She expressed admiration for the policies of former State's Attorney Alveraz, particularly relating to her work with the human trafficking task force. This runs in opposition to many of her LGBTQ colleagues, particularly those working with queer youth of color—as mentioned in Chapter 4, these communities are not only critical of Alveraz, they have explicitly considered her an adversary of these vulnerable populations. This respondent actually expressed concern that Alveraz would be leaving, and although she was "not a huge criminal justice supporter" she thought that as a city, Chicago would be in a deficit having lost the human trafficking task force. Currently, she has personal relationships with many individuals working with the human trafficking task force office, and considers them "good friends" that she have presented on various panels and presentations with. Yet, during the interview she provided a critique of the abolitionist logic that has dominated those involved in the End Demand movement, which includes close friends of hers. She goes on to say:

**Respondent:** "I mean--and, you know, specifically working with the LGBT community, I have a very specific perspective on sex work in terms of force and coercion and, you know, for a lot and all these different pieces where stuff happens a little bit differently with younger people. I [question] the usual story that we hear about trafficking. So, I don't--I don't like automatically label everyone involved in trading sex or sex work as a trafficking victim.

**Interview:** Right.



**Respondent:** As the stories I know about, you know, younger girls who get ended up, you know, being trapped out at truck stops and in, you know, rental--multi-rental hotels and you know what I mean? So, you know, it's hard for me, to be like, 'oh, I think this person's such a horrible, pimpy perpetrator when it's like another young person who is helping someone else figure out, you know, unfortunately how to survive.

In this quote, the respondent is referencing instances that may occur when a young person helps another young person navigate the sex trade—reiterating similar concerns mentioned earlier where young people helping each other might both be caught up in the criminal justice system. Although she disagrees with some of the End Demand narrative around sex work, her personal relationships with those abiding by that perspective has helped her to advocate on behalf of her primary population of LGBTQ youth. Through her work with End Demand proponents at the individual level, she states that she has provided a useful source to help to slightly reshape the abolitionist narrative towards their one-minded focus on “saving” girls and women, explaining that her personal relationship with one of the main individuals behind End Demand legislation has allowed them to challenge the idea that the sex trade only effects women and girls—and that boys, and trans youth are also caught up in this system as well.

However, she goes on to note her mistrust with the criminal justice system that is dominating this debate, indicating that she has worked with some individual members of SWOP on issues surrounding the LGBTQ community, describing SWOP as a group with “tons of rad queer people”, and that their view of decriminalization aligns with the LGBTQ perspective of seeing sex work as “similar to a lot of the sexual freedom and sexual liberation issues that have been very central to LGBTQ identity...because our sexualities have been criminalized until pretty recently.” She concluded that she does not see these organizations coming together any

time soon—yet views their role as a person that can bridge these two logics, as possibly inching each group closer to a solution on addressing survival sex work in the LGBTQ community.

To conclude this section, I wanted to make note of a religious organization that works with indigent men in the sex trade. This respondent, while acknowledging that her organization was to an extent more “rescue-based,” decried that as trafficking has become a “hot-topic” among religious groups, she continues to struggle to convey the mission of her organization to certain groups: “Even defending our existence, because the idea that men are prostituting, is very foreign to most people, and the idea that an adult male can be a victim of sex trafficking, or might be prostituting, but might prefer to do something else, and can't find the resources to do something else.” She noted that she wanted to see her organization do more work with LGBTQ organizations, and by extension, SWOP, and described why this might be interesting to her as a member of a rescue based organization:

“I think it's really great that LGBTQ and sex worker groups talk about [men in sex work], because no other groups talk about it. I like seeing that people are talking about it, and people are bringing it up, and that's great, and certainly a lot of LGBTQ groups exist, because they started helping people that were marginalized and being treated unfairly by society. But now we're talking about men, it's either going to be LGBTQ men, or trafficked men, and really the majority of men we see in this situation, are in between. A lot of them are not part of the LGBTQ community, and even if they do identify as gay or bisexual, or any other identity, they're not active members, because they're not wealthy, and they're not white, a lot of them have hustled in the Boystown area, which is one of the central areas in Chicago and the US for the gay community. But they're not part of the gay community, in the way that most people who live there are. So a lot of our men don't fit into any of these groups that are trying to advocate for them.”

This respondent here sketches out the pros and cons of being involved in collaborations with sex worker rights organizations and LGBTQ organizations: on the one hand, they are

responsible for bringing attention to the fact that men can be involved in the sex trade. On the other hand, many of the individuals she works with do not consider themselves part of the LGBTQ community, nor do many consider themselves sex workers, which has precluded some of their interest in working with organizations like SWOP. As a result of the in-between status of her organization, she said that collaboration with LGBTQ and sex worker organizations is still something they are trying to work out as an organization (specifically her, she joked). Moreover, during our conversation, she had reiterated her organizational talking points about their organization's goals to assist men in the sex trade, helping them to find other opportunities outside of sex work. Yet, she acknowledged that she was willing to accept different logics of thinking about sex work. At the bottom line, she thought that LGBTQ groups and sex worker groups could provide helpful resources for her clients. She had met members of SWOP on several occasions: at a health fair, as well as at a roundtable discussing issues of sex work among members of the LGBTQ community. While there is still hesitancy to set up a collaboration with SWOP (and based on prior conversations with SWOP members, the hesitancy is mutual), she thought it would be beneficial for her clients to have access to the resources that SWOP members provided, particularly the legal clinic which she thought may help her clients with expungement of prostitution arrests. However, she said that her clients were not using these resources, and thought out loud as to why this was the case: "LGBTQ groups are doing more outreach, and talking about sex work more, and I'm curious why more of our guys are not accessing these resources, and I guess a lot of them identify as heterosexual or don't want to talk about that they're doing sex work as men."

Additionally, she noted that sex worker and LGBTQ advocacy groups she has encountered are "very much like sex work is work...I foresee that being a barrier to us partnering

with them...I'm not opposed to it, I think there could be room for it... but I foresee there being many many things we will have to talk over as an organization to get to that point." Indeed, she began to set the wheels in motion through her efforts to attend some of the LGBTQ and sex worker oriented events, and later in my fieldwork had contacted members of SWOP in order to gain their assistance for a research project that they were doing. SWOP, aware of the organization's rescue based approach, was very hesitant to cooperate—even as one member vouched for the organization as a result of meeting them at the aforementioned sex work roundtable. So while the collaboration between this particular organization and LGBTQ/sex worker rights groups has not come to fruition, interaction between two individuals coming from organizations with competing institutional logics may have softened the edges for future collaborative work. Nevertheless, it will likely take considerably more interaction between such individuals before any kind of substantive partnership could take place—perhaps making room for collaboration at the individual, rather than at the organizational level.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter begins with a discussion of the difficulties inherent in institutional complexity, providing a context for looking at controversial issues like sex work and sex trafficking. Through an examination of organizations and institutions as “inhabited”, I discuss human service organizational responses to the sex trade, with an accompanying section on how individuals within organizations are addressing institutional complexity surrounding the sex trade. For a few organizations, the logics that they use to undergird their work with individuals involved in the sex trade lie strongly with either the logics of abolitionism, or the logics of decriminalization. However, most human service nonprofits in this project, which I refer to as “neutral”, do not work with sex workers specifically, and find themselves caught between these two competing logics.

With the dominant abolitionist discourse, it was not unusual for well-meaning human service providers to accept this logic without critically examining the implications that it may have on current sex workers: End Demand organizations used harm reduction language palatable to social workers to encourage support of their policies—and for some organizations it was successful. SWOP, and other similar organizations were aware of the negative impacts that End Demand could have on their population, yet it was not until the past several years that they were able to encourage opposition to this narrative among organizations that were not already well-versed in radical harm reduction services. Members of SWOP emphasized that when they explained the reasons behind decriminalization of sex work to persons who may have not had much contact with the subject, individuals often left accepting of their position. This phenomenon came out in my data—among respondents who had attended trainings from SWOP, all emerged supportive of decriminalization (and from what I witnessed through my ethnographic work, as well as what the respondents told me, the vast majority of the trainees emerged supportive of decriminalization).

Of course, respondents who are likely to request a training from SWOP are likely to be already leaning towards an acceptance of decriminalization—but this does not mean that this is what their organization supports. A few respondents who have received trainings, or have collaborated with SWOP work with organizations that are, or have been, involved in End Demand. Indeed, the recent acceptance of decriminalization may be encouraged by other cultural and social factors, including the support of Amnesty International (2016) and the World Health Organization (2012) on the decriminalization of prostitution, and front-page articles in major news sources supportive of decriminalization such as Emily Bazelon’s 2016 New York Times article “Should Prostitution Be a Crime?”. One of my respondents, now working at an

HIV/AIDS organization mentioned that she had until recently been extremely supportive of End Demand—when I asked what changed, she laughed and said “I don’t know, I read books.” She went on to describe that her view “was based mostly on classism. And I believed people were only doing it for survival, and they didn’t have the capability of doing it for themselves. Over time, talking to people, talking to sex workers I kind of realized that I was wrong.” While there have certainly been some cultural shifts increasing the propensity for service providers to accept the logics of decriminalization, the importance of individual interactions with members of organizations like SWOP, or sex workers and general, cannot be understated. As SWOP professionalized, and began to form relationships with service providers, they were often able to reach service staff at a micro individual level, providing a direct context for understanding how abolitionist policies may be accomplishing the opposite of what they intended.

Many respondents recognized the merits inherent in decriminalization logics even if this was not the stance of their organization; respondents varied significantly to the extent to which they were willing to actively advocate against abolitionism. Regardless, these respondents, they have become reliant on the relationships they have cultivated with advocacy organizations (in particular SWOP) in order to 1) clarify issues that concern individuals involved in the sex trade to help improve service provision and/or 2) provide a source of legitimacy for individuals working at organizations to incrementally push logics away from the hegemonic abolitionist approach, towards helping their organization accept decriminalization. A great deal of this work is not in the top-down change of organizational logics, but rather a bottom up approach that many respondents have undertaken to gradually alter their organizational logics that they may find problematic.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This dissertation analyzes the collaborative processes between advocacy organizations and nonprofit human service organizations, and how organizations (and individuals within organizations) make decisions around these processes. In this study, I situate collaboration within the context of the Strategic Action Field of sex work and sex trafficking, noting that the complexity within this field results in individuals making difficult decisions around how to collaborate, who to collaborate with, and how to engage in advocacy and/or service provision. This work builds on recent literature on nonprofits, viewing human service nonprofits as crucial advocates for their often underserved populations. Specifically I look at how staff at human service nonprofits advocate on behalf of sex workers, a population that they may not specifically serve—and may rely on advocacy organizations to receive information about this population to improve service provision. These advocacy organizations, moreover, have been aided by human service nonprofits that may serve as experts and allies in either the fight to end the demand for sex work (for abolitionist organizations) or the fight towards decriminalization of sex work (for decriminalization organizations).

Using data collected through participant observation, qualitative interviews, and news and media documents, I discovered that although there is a strong support system for organizations promoting the decriminalization of the sex trade (i.e., the sex worker rights/decriminalization approach), the End Demand (i.e., abolitionist) approach still drives policy changes and discourse at the policy level. That said, I found a surprising amount of support for decriminalization among high-level staff at human service nonprofits across Chicago. Most of these staff members expressing support for decriminalization worked at organizations that did not take an explicit stance on sex work; some worked at organizations that did not

publicly acknowledge that their clients may have been involved in sex work. These staff members, desiring to bring the logics of decriminalization into their organization have been contacting members of SWOP-Chicago to provide trainings in order to help their staff understand issues confronting sex workers that may be divergent with the more established End Demand approach.

Despite this incremental support for decriminalization, there emerged a huge blow against efforts for decriminalization during the writing of this dissertation. A website containing advertisements for sexual services, Backpage, came under pressure from authorities (including Sheriff Dart, but also as a result of investigations by California Attorney General Kamala Harris (now CA Junior Democratic Senator), and Senators Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.)) ceased operation of its adult service sections. SWOP-Chicago responded to this event, in a collective statement:

“Many members of our community will no longer be able to pay their rent, purchase food, or afford medical bills because a crucial source of their income has been eliminated...Backpage was a low-cost and low-barrier means through which many sex workers advertise. Because it did not discriminate based on gender, race, or class, it was an especially important place of advertising for the most marginalized members of our community: LGBTQ sex workers, sex workers of color, and unstably housed sex workers.” (Sex Workers Outreach Project-Chicago, 2017).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Interestingly enough, as I read the Sunday New York Times during a writing break, I came across an article entitled “Backpage’s Sex Ads Are Gone. Child Trafficking? Hardly,” which has the tagline “Pressured, the website dropped sex ads, many of which featured minors. But the unexpected result is that prostitution may now be even riskier” (Williams, March 12, 2017, pp. 1, 15). Other publications have noted similar effects (Mehta, January 12, 2017; Petro, January 17, 2017; Zimmerman, January 12, 2017). While it remains to be seen what will come from publications such as the New York Times publishing on the perils of shutting down Backpage, I can only imagine the anger and frustration behind many of the sex worker rights activists I have spoken to over the past several years.



SWOP's organizational meeting in January was among the best attended in about a year, with members of the community coming to inquire about assistance they could receive, or actions they could do to protest the closure of Backpage. At the meeting, new individuals, or members that have not been to a meeting in a while, were livid and scared for what the closure of Backpage meant for their livelihood. One trans woman described Backpage as where she received her primary source of income—other adult advertising sites were not as amenable to what she termed “gender nonconforming sex workers.” In a sense, the closure of Backpage would seem to indicate that the End Demand side was winning. While this research showed that there were quite a few service agencies that were supportive of SWOP, this support generally did not go so far as to actively advocate against End Demand proponents like Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart. So while it may seem that sex workers rights activists have made enormous gains in regards to support from certain human service nonprofits, some activists I spoke to indicated that they were still working on ways to survive in an environment that was largely hostile to their existence and their labor.

The continued commitment of politicians and law enforcement to End Demand was striking given that I found declining support for that position among my interviews with staff at HSNPs. This is a challenge to recent work that has argued for a “collaborative nexus” between law enforcement and human service nonprofits in removing individuals from the sex trade (Dewey & St. Germain, 2016; Musto, 2016). In this project, I certainly found some respondents at HSNPs that are strongly supportive of the efforts of law enforcement to criminalize clients of sex workers and shut down online adult advertisements, but these respondents were in the minority.

## **Collaboration between Human Service Nonprofits and Advocacy Organizations on Issues of Sex Work**

It has been well established that human service nonprofits are crucial advocates for their clients, and are involved in policy advocacy on behalf of marginalized populations (Berry & Arons, 2003; Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Mosley, 2010, 2011; Schmid, Bar, & Nirel, 2008). However, while many of these organizations may be well-versed on legislation that affects their target population, most HSNPs are not specifically working with sex workers, which makes advocacy on behalf of this population more challenging. Sex work remains a criminalized and stigmatized activity in this country, and the movement to decriminalize sex work remains controversial. Upon embarking on this project, I envisioned staff at HSNPs would tell me that they are supportive of the movement to end the demand for prostitution, particularly since most organizations are working with populations that may have been harmed during sex work, may be engaging in sex work for survival, or may have been coerced into sex work. However, there was considerable interest among respondents in the movement to decriminalize sex work, and to understand the viewpoints of organizations like SWOP, which has been advocating the decriminalization of sex work for over a decade in Chicago. These respondents reached out to SWOP to engage in mutually beneficial collaborations; including trainings from SWOP, collaborating on protest events, collaboration on outreach provision, and collaboration on legal service clinics. However, this dissertation finds that there are not many organizations that are actively involved in advocacy around sex work, either for policies around abolition of sex work, or for decriminalization of sex work, which is unsurprising considering that most of these organizations are not working specifically with this population. For SWOP specifically, this has been a point of contention: they have been noticing that more human service nonprofits are

willing to contact them for trainings and collaborations, but remain fearful of counteracting the relatively more powerful advocates End Demand, and one SWOP board members speculated that this could be because some of their funding comes from the same sources.

To explain this interest in collaboration with SWOP, it is not sufficient to focus exclusively on the organizational level. For human service nonprofits, these collaborations were rarely the product of an organizational effort or broader organizational conversation to decide to collaborate with SWOP. This often happened through the decision of an individual working at the organizations to consciously decide that they were supportive of decriminalization of sex work and personally believed that SWOP would be an excellent starting point to educate their staff on issues confronting those in the sex trade. One SWOP board member, in an informal conversation, informed me that they thought collaborations had been increasing in recent years because “sometimes, one or two key people can radically transform an organization”, and their theory was that as sex worker rights has become more accepted nationally and internationally, individuals paying attention to feminist and social justice debates often find themselves agreeing with sex worker rights discourse. These relatively more progressive individuals, they described, often find themselves employed in HSNPs. Although the idea that a single individual can “radically transform an organization” may be optimistic in these cases, my data does show that there are often one or two people at an organization that have sought to work the decriminalization logic into their organization.

However, it is not the case that all human service nonprofits have shifted their support for End Demand towards their support of SWOP. For End Demand Illinois, human services have been consistent sources of support since its establishment in 2009, and I spoke to quite a few respondents from HSNPs that were original members of the group. One of the goals of End

Demand has been to increase service provision, and they have helped to pass legislation that would take fines from arrested sex purchasers and put this back into service provision. For SWOP however, the realization that human service organizations could be crucial allies is more recent. It has been over the past three to four years that SWOP has sought out relationships with HSNPs—and in turn, some HSNPs have sought out relationships with SWOP. However, it still remains that SWOP struggles in gaining support from human service nonprofits, because sex workers (as opposed to sex trafficking victims) are not a politically popular cause to advocate for, something that SWOP members conveyed to me multiple times. Indeed, it is also the case that SWOP needs to be able to successfully manage the minimal resources that they do have: as a SWOP board member notes “it’s not possible to counter their [End Demand’s] kinds of media campaigns like on the same scale that they put it out. So sometimes we have to be more strategic in how we use our resources.” In this case, it was a focus on maintaining collaboration with human service nonprofits, and leaving some of the more radical activism to other groups in their field. Some board members note that this is a natural extension from where SWOP began:

“I think part of it just at the end of the day SWOP is a pretty small organization that’s all volunteer led...what SWOP does on a day to day basis is what its volunteers want to do and for whatever reason a lot of what our volunteers have been interested in doing are things like a legal clinic or you know, street outreach to street based sex workers or the PROS network has been a big thing so that’s part of it. I think it is also may be related to the fact that a lot of our volunteers are working in social work settings. So it’s a part of our natural social network that we have more interactions with service providers.”

From my attendance at SWOP meetings, I did observe that volunteers were more interested in participating in outreach and legal services than any other SWOP activity. One concern articulated by SWOP members is that even as SWOP has professionalized to look more like the service organizations they are collaborating with (as described in Chapter 5), is that the

level of collaboration has increased, but is not at the level that SWOP would prefer. While all of the board members of SWOP noted that their collaborations with human service nonprofits has improved over the past several years, they desire to see more from their human service partners in regards to advocacy—but also recognize that it is difficult for their human service counterparts to engage in the same kinds of activities. SWOP’s challenger position results in a heavier reliance on support of human service nonprofits that supply them with the legitimacy needed to challenge End Demand.

### ***Explaining HSO-AO Collaboration***

In Chapter 1, I briefly discussed three organizational theories that are often used to address reasons behind organizational collaboration: resource dependency theory, transaction cost theory, and neo-institutional theory. I note that each of these theories may be helpful in framing reasons behind collaboration, but that they were each insufficient for completely explaining collaboration in this particularly context. Specifically, each of these theories explains why organizations may collaborate for reasons of self-interest, but is less likely to explain what happens when we see collaboration happen in this context.

Where we do see resource dependency play out in practice is in the case of SWOP: as a small volunteer run organization SWOP is more dependent upon the support that they gather from human service nonprofits. While End Demand advocacy organizations are also helped by the support of human service nonprofits as well, they are more likely to have access to paid lawyers and policy professionals, something which SWOP did not have access to until recently. However, this resource dependency does not trump SWOP’s ultimate mission--when I asked board members about the possibility of collaborating with organizations that disagreed with them on End Demand policies, even if they provided needed services or advocacy: they all said no, as

noted here when I asked about the possibility of collaborating with an organization that advocated for End Demand, but had services for individuals in the sex trade.

“No. Um, yeah, so for me that would be a violation of shared values. So if we had radically different goals, like if someone wanted to see the end of the sex trade, I don’t foresee a partnership there. So for instance I don’t think that we would work closely with End Demand organizations. In part just because, I think in terms of like sustained partnerships, I feel like we wouldn’t be able to find common ground frequently enough to find a partnership.”

As articulated by this board member, SWOP does not share values with End Demand organizations—organizations that want to see the end of the sex trade are not viable partners. While End Demand organizations noted that they would be more likely to partner with someone because in the end “they still wanted to help women”, they phrased it in such a way that indicated that they would allow organizations like SWOP to utilize their resources—demonstrating an interesting power dynamic whereby they were the providers of resources that other “less important” organizations could take advantage of.<sup>48</sup> SWOP, in contrast, sees End Demand organizations as adversaries of women that fail to provide them with a sense of empowerment and agency.

The second theory, transaction cost theory (Williamson, 1981), I found little evidence of: there is minimal indication that organizations are involved in collaborations in order to “reduce transaction costs and thereby maximize economic or psychological benefits” (Guo & Acar, 2005, p. 341). In some cases, transaction costs may increase as a result of these collaborations: SWOP, for instance, could have maintained their status as a peer support agency without much effort. By entering the field of human services, they have actually increased their economic costs—their

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<sup>48</sup> Another example of this interesting power dynamic is when I discussed SWOP’s point of view with an End Demand member. When I mentioned SWOP she stated: “Gee, I don’t even know them!” and then proceeded to state that “I think there are some women that are not ready for End Demand”, and “maybe they’re ready for them.”

foray into human service provision has not corresponded with an increasing amount of funding. Much of their funding for human service provision comes out of the organizations' meager budget, or at times, members' own pockets. Indeed, for almost all of the organizations looked at in this project, there is little indication that collaboration for advocacy purposes leads to decreased transaction costs.

It is the third theory, neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) where there may be the most visible application. Neo-institutional theory is primarily macro in nature, and may be seen as a reaction to prevailing concepts of economic rationality (Suddaby, Seidl, & Le, 2013). Organizations are extremely aware of social and cultural pressures that stem from their current environment, and are driven more by the pursuit of legitimacy within that environment. Over time, organizations begin to develop similar forms, practices, and rules that begin to look like each other, taking on a "taken-for-granted" status. This dissertation has empirically shown that this has happened in certain cases: Chapter 5 specifically shows how SWOP began to adopt practices from their human service nonprofit partners in order to gain more support and legitimacy from members of their field. However, I assert throughout that there is certainly more going on than a single-minded pursuit of legitimacy, which is where I bring in the theories of strategic action fields (SAF) and institutional logics—complementary extensions of neo-institutional theory that help to explain exogenous and endogenous changes in the field-level, organizational level and even the individual level.

### **Strategic Action Fields**

Using the concept of SAFs, I examine how organizations working within a particular field interact with each other, and "vie for advantage" within these arenas (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012, p.4). Using strategic action fields, I was able to delineate incumbent and

challenger actors, a key feature of this theoretical framework, which is interested in asking questions around who are the key actors, what resources do they bring to the table, and how they negotiate manifestations of power. While I find that End Demand organizations do serve as the incumbent within this SAF, the field is also experiencing an exogenous shock from an ascendant logic from a related SAF, that of substance abuse services. This “shock” of harm reduction resulted in organizations working with clients involved in the sex trade to modify some of their preconceived notions about this population. While harm reduction has not led to an all out acceptance of the decriminalization of sex work, it has led to an increased knowledge of the harms of criminalization, and a need to be better trained in responding to the service needs of sex workers.

### **Institutional Logics and Inhabited Institutions**

Institutional logics help us to further understand the relationships between individuals, organizations and societal systems (Thornton et al., 2012). Values, norms and assumptions are embedded in institutional logics, and it moves from a focus on the logic of legitimacy, to a focus on multiple and competing institutional logics, thus leading to an institutionally complex environment. As mentioned in the previous section, present in this field are a significant number of neutral organizations—that is, organizations that do not take a stance publicly regarding sex work. Upon closer inspection, there are numerous individuals working at these organizations that do take a certain stance on sex work, and within the organization undertake particular activities in order to incrementally create or change the logics within the organization. Inhabited institutions centers around the process through which individuals make meaning through social interaction—although individuals are still influenced by the predominant institutional logics, they can in turn interpret them through personal interactions with others in the field. The



importance of SWOP cultivating personal relationships with a single person at an organization really cannot be understated. As I describe in Chapter 5, SWOP's professionalization, and subsequent entry into human service provision enabled them to connect with individual staff at human service nonprofits that are working on similar issues. In turn, this shift of SWOP towards human service provision provided human service staff a reason to collaborate with SWOP, something that wasn't present before. In other words, even if staff members may have personally believed in decriminalization of sex work, there was little reason for them to approach collaboration with SWOP if they had remained an underground peer support group.

### **Future Research**

This research suggests several promising lines of inquiry for the future. While this project focuses on directors and high level managers of organizations, and what their collaborative work looks like with advocacy organizations, more attention should be paid to frontline service workers. Frontline service workers were some of the individuals present at the Backpage protest mentioned in Chapter 1; they are also, according to some of my respondents, hesitant to engage in some of the approaches suggested by harm reduction service modalities. They may be involved in protests or social justice movements in their personal lives; or they may have no interest in activism outside of the case advocacy that they do with their clients. This research indirectly revealed that frontline workers are key players in shaping work with sex workers, as described in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, as a harm reduction advocate found common ground in working with frontline workers who were distancing themselves from their organization's abstinence-only policy. Future work on this topic may benefit from the theoretical framework of street level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980), reflecting upon how public service workers (such as social workers) function as policy decision makers in their own work. As a group of people that

interacts directly with clients, frontline human service workers are the public face of policy to a large number of people. They have substantial discretionary ability to interpret policies based on individual cases, and thus government and even organizational policy may look differently depending upon the actions of a few frontline services workers. To bring in the framework of street-level bureaucracy in this type of project, it will be extremely important to examine the thoughts and actions of frontline service staff on collaborative processes and advocacy, as they may be more of the driving force behind these collaborations than I had initially assumed upon embarking on this project.

Second, it is important to continue research that gets at what street-based sex workers—those that are currently and not currently involved in social service systems—have to say about the work that is being done supposedly on their behalf. Much of the research that involves street-based sex workers focuses their personal sexual health and drug use habits, as well as their experiences of violence and stigma. Research has solidly demonstrated that sex workers perceive stigma, and are victims of violence, and there are frequently co-occurring substance use, physical health and mental health concerns, particularly among street-based populations (Inciardi, Surratt & Kurtz, 2006; Lazarus, Deering, Nabess, Gibson, Tyndall, & Shannon, 2011; Surratt, Kurtz, Weaver, & Inciardi, 2005; Surratt, Kurtz, Chen, Mooss, 2012). However, as scholars and activists understand that violence and stigma exists, more research needs to be done on the perceptions of street based workers on methods and services that will reduce violence and stigma in their lives.

Third, for current and former street-based workers that are currently involved with service delivery systems, more work needs to be done on their perceptions on this service work. Not nearly enough research is done on client perceptions of service delivery systems in general

(for important exceptions see reports by the Young Women’s Empowerment Project, including Iman, Fullwood, Paz, W, & Hassan (2009) and Torres & Paz (2012)). Are they being harmed by these systems, and if so how? What services do they think they need? What are their interactions with service staff like? Are they interested in participating in activism, whether sex work activism, or another type of activism? How do they perceive their interactions with activists (if they have any interactions with them)? There is a great deal of work that is done on barriers for this population—and not enough of how this population addresses these barriers in their everyday lives.

Finally, this work underscores the need for more research on small advocacy organizations, many of which are doing a tremendous amount of work on very small budgets. By understanding the work of these often ignored grassroots or underground nonprofits, nonprofit scholars and social workers can get a better glimpse at how these organizations are managing their work in a difficult environment—whether this is through unique forms of fundraising, gathering supportive allies, or working in dedicated isolation, focusing increased attention on these small nonprofits will help scholars to gain a fuller picture of the entire nonprofit universe.

### **Note on Research with End Demand Organizations**

Due to the nature of my research, and my pre-existing relationship with SWOP-Chicago, I was precluded from attending and researching many End Demand focused spaces,<sup>49</sup> and one prominent End Demand organization, CAASE, refused to be a part of this study. Additionally, many of the early End Demand supporters and proponents have left Chicago, and have appeared to gone on to do other non-advocacy or social service related careers. I opted to not contact these individuals, as I wanted to better understand the field of sex work and sex trafficking as it is

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<sup>49</sup> Meetings with the Human Trafficking Task force are not open to the public, and my efforts to contact members of this task force to attend a meeting were met with no response.

happening now. While I do not doubt that this study yielded a tremendous amount of data, including some interview data from End Demand oriented organizations, there are many questions that remain from my inability to access more of the End Demand space. I do not think that my theoretical framework work would have changed—End Demand remains the incumbent critic, and SWOP remains the challenger, but there could have been some practical implications stemming from increased research in End Demand spaces.

First, I received a great deal of information about their work from previously published reports and articles, some of which are over a decade old. Are these reports still accurate perceptions of what End Demand supporters believe and stand for? As critiques around the use of the criminal justice system in crimes such as drug use and prostitution has increased, so has support for sex workers in some activist circles. This has been revealed through media discussions around prostitution, as well as support from Amnesty International and the World Health Organization. Has this cultural shift influenced prominent members of End Demand, either by making them either more adamant about the support of their End Demand policies, or more open to a consideration of certain aspects of decriminalization?

Second, most of what I hear about End Demand from organizations like SWOP is portrayed in a negative context. Sex worker rights activists often refer to supporters of End Demand policies as “SWERFs,” or Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminists. This is a term that refers to feminists who exclude sex workers from their push for human rights. Based on what I heard from End Demand activists, they do not seek to “exclude” sex workers from the policy table, and are open to hearing from their perspective. Could this answer have been an example of social desirability bias? Possibly, and SWOP members that I interviewed would likely put that as the reason. This being said, I doubt if members of SWOP sought to meet with

members of End Demand, they would be outright shunned. However, it is true that their proposed policies may be met with silence, or ignored.

Finally, having access to meetings with the Cook County Human Trafficking task force would have added a great deal of nuance and complexity to this research. These meetings are closed to the public, and the minutes are not publicly available, so it is difficult to analyze precisely what is occurring within these meetings. By including this ethnographic data in this research, I would have been able to improve our understanding of how sex work and sex trafficking are discussed in these places, and even if it is a priority in comparison to the more frequent labor trafficking. As sex worker activists deride sex trafficking statistics and anecdotes as being sensationalized, there is a chance that the “hatred” that anti-trafficking groups have for consensual sex work is equally sensationalized, and perhaps there is chance that these groups may hash out manageable solutions to sex trafficking sitting around a policy table. While this may appear to be an overly optimistic and maudlin take on what is a longstanding adversarial relationship, there is a chance that as sex worker activists have been able to influence individual members of human service nonprofits to support decriminalization, so too may they influence individual members of the End Demand movement; this has been happening in cities such as San Francisco, and Portland, OR, and it remains to be seen whether this can happen in the more sexually conservative environment of Chicago.

### **Feminism and the Debate Around Sex Work**

Feminism is embedded in the debate around sex work. While I use terms stemming from the feminist debate on sex work to define terms in this dissertation (specifically abolitionism and decriminalization), I minimally engage with feminism as a theoretical framework for several reasons. First, there is no shortage of scholarship examining feminist perspectives on sex work,

some of which I refer to in Chapter 2 in discussing “abolitionist” and “sex worker rights” approaches to sex work. Second, I found in my interviews that feminism was not a driving force behind the work that the organization did (or did not do) with sex workers or victims of sex trafficking. Most, if not all respondents, identified themselves as “feminist,” while many stated that their organization may not be explicitly feminist, but abided by feminist principles, in that they believed in gender equality. One response given, that summed up many of my respondents’ organizations is the following: “we are not explicitly feminist, but we certainly abide by feminist principles.”

For respondents and organizations that supported the decriminalization of sex work, they appeared to be driven more by the influence of harm reduction than their adherence to feminist principles. Several of these respondents were critical of what was termed “white feminism,” a recent term that speaks for the tendency of some feminists to focus on the concerns of well-off white cisgender women to the exclusion of poor women, women of color, and/or transgender women. Respondents that spoke of white feminism (certainly not a majority of my respondents, but there were a couple) all supported decriminalization, and felt that sex trafficking was overstated by “neoliberal” feminists that sought to collaborate with law enforcement. For respondents and organizations that supported the abolition of sex work, their concern was more around the removal of women and girls from prostitution—they spoke of it as more of an issue of public safety for this population, rather than explicitly a result of feminism.

### **Concerns about Whiteness and Privilege in the Sex Worker Rights Movement: A Movement towards Anti-Criminalization**

Before concluding, I wanted to reflect upon upcoming challenges that have affected SWOP and other sex worker rights organizations, and a possible mechanism for addressing these

challenges. Some activists have noted that the logic of decriminalization may be insufficient to address the needs of many sex workers, particularly those oppressed by other systems (race, gender, sexuality, immigration status, age), and have thus advocated for a turn to “anti-criminalization”. The logic of anti-criminalization is often referenced more in activist rather than academic and practitioner discourse, although it may serve as a useful framework to address the concerns around End Demand proposed by human service nonprofits. While decriminalization has a primary focus on removing criminal penalties from vice crimes, such as drug use and sex work, anti-criminalization is “not just about sexual freedom” or “right to choose,” although it supports these ideas too (Koyama, 2012, p. 1). More fundamentally, it is about fighting for social and economic justice in the face of pervasive state violence against communities of color, immigrants, street youth, drug users, and others” (Koyama, 2012, p. 1). As mentioned by activist Emi Koyama, “criminalization happens on the ground, not the legislature,” (Koyama, 2012, p. 1) meaning that even though there have been some well meaning legislation passed that purports to help those arrested for sex work, these individuals are still targeted and arrested for “crimes” that may be tangential to their involvement in sex trade, such as drugs or immigration status.

I bring this up in order to discuss the issue of privilege, whiteness and class within advocacy movements, particularly within sex worker rights advocacy movements such as SWOP. Sex worker rights activists have been critiqued by both abolitionist advocates, as well as anti-criminalization social justice advocates, for focusing on the needs of white middle class individuals in the process discounting trans women, women of color, and working class and poor women (Koyama, 2012; Moran, August 29, 2015; Panichelli, Wahab, Saunders, & Capous-Desyllas, 2014). In some ways, I have seen this addressed and acknowledged by SWOP: SWOP has two board members (of nine) of color and as one board member confirmed, “unfortunately,

the face of activism is still white”. The whiteness of sex workers’ rights movements has not gone unnoticed by members of SWOP, and they have proposed a variety of solutions over the past several years to address this, including meeting at different locations around the city (with a special emphasis on meeting on the South Side), trying to work more with racial justice movements, proposing methods to pay some volunteers, and contacting service provider allies (most of whose clients are persons of color) to tell them about SWOP. Ultimately though, it is a difficult task to increase diversity in an organization, without being accused of tokenism. I spoke to one of SWOP’s members, a person of color, about how some of these issues could be addressed:

“I think it’s definitely a weakness of SWOP, because it’s something that a lot of organizations that are not friendly to sex workers attack SWOP with, and I feel that SWOP wants to bring in more people of different races and different social classes, but um, it hasn’t really been done. I’m not entirely sure why that is. It might be just that as a volunteer organization, no one has been motivated enough to try to do that, I mean, it’s definitely something that I would like to do, bring in more women of color into the organization, because I know, because I’ve talked to several women of color who are sex workers of various types, and some of them haven’t heard of SWOP, and kind of feel that it doesn’t address their issues.”

When I asked how this could be addressed, she noted that

“it would be maybe a bit affirmative action-y, well, maybe not affirmative action, it’s something I’ve talked about, maybe having a SWOP black chapter. Or divisions specifically for that. Like, or at least, having a meeting specifically for people of color...maybe SWOP needs to directly say that they have meetings directed towards that, and have events directed towards that and bring people in, and, like um, general membership meeting, like volunteer meetings where we telling people that we want them to be part of the organization. It needs to be clearly stated, and then actively say, do this, and then giving people resources to do their own projects too.”



In order to diversify SWOP, it is likely that they may need to spend more time reaching out to other social justice groups fighting for other anti-criminalization issues. This is something that they have addressed as a group—but it remains difficult for an all-volunteer organization to spend a large amount of time forming coalitions with other social justice organizations as well as human service nonprofits. Anti-criminalization is a logic that may appear to help social workers situate issues around sex work, by placing it in a larger context with problems affecting other criminalized populations, including undocumented persons, homeless persons, substance users, LGBTQ persons, among others. Embedded in this anti-criminalization framework is the need to fight for economic and social justice among communities that are subject to violence and an overreach in law enforcement. Decriminalization of sex work will reduce criminal penalties on sex workers broadly; but it may not have a large affect on other populations that are subject to unjust criminalization.

## **Conclusion**

I have concluded this chapter by going through the organizational theories discussed throughout this dissertation, and reviewing my empirical findings through examining these various frameworks. This project has contributed to our understanding of nonprofit organizational collaboration, where collaborations may be informal, freely entered into, and at times controversial. In a sense, these collaborations may appear to be irrational, at least from a purely economic standpoint, but I have made the claim that there are distinct reasons behind these collaborations, primarily relating to the shift in organizational logics towards a focus on harm reduction service modalities. This has made many human service nonprofits more amenable to SWOP's desire to reduce harm towards the sex worker communities, and more

concerned that an increased criminalization and policing approach towards johns may be harmful to those communities that they human service nonprofits are trying to serve.

As human service providers have more closely collaborated with SWOP, this has resulted in a great deal of benefits to the organization, but there have been some drawbacks. As of the writing of this conclusion, there are still actors within the field (primarily other activist groups) that have critiqued SWOP for not being activist enough, and for not paying enough attention to the confluence between sex work and societal structures such as capitalism, racism or xenophobia. Some groups desire more peer support and activist activities from SWOP: others want SWOP to delve more into service provision, to be consultants on health projects, and to generally increase their presence within the human service field. Some of SWOP's members certainly want to explore more of their options within human services. As one board member told me: "Our dream is to sort of have a St. James' Infirmary<sup>50</sup> model where you have therapists on staff, nurses on staff, and other health professionals on staff that exclusively serve people in the sex trade. Now that several of us are actually working in the health fields, this is something that may eventually be possible."

The foray of SWOP into a St. James Infirmary service model may not be far off, and several board members confirmed that this is precisely the model that they are aspiring to. Yet, SWOP, and organizations advocating for sex worker rights continue to face challenges. During the comparatively more liberal Obama years, there was more room for nuanced activism on these issues. Yet with the election of Donald Trump, many service providers have been increasingly concerned with their own survival, and may neglect their work on issues of sex work and sex trafficking if they do not perceive it as directly affecting their participants. If anything, it is likely

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<sup>50</sup> See more information in chapter 2 about the St. James Infirmary. For academic research on the subject, see Majic (2014b).

that this would disproportionately disadvantage sex worker rights activists, considering that first daughter Ivanka Trump has already made sex trafficking one of her causes du jour (Klein, February 23, 2017).

However, the election of Donald Trump may have the opposite effect: organizations may be more likely to put their differences aside and work together for the benefit of their population. A statement put forth by the national coordinating committee for the Women's March On Washington (a January 21<sup>st</sup> event advocating for women's rights, specifically chosen for the day after Donald Trump was inaugurated) was considered to be "unapologetically progressive" (Cauterucci, January 12, 2017) and initially put themselves in solidarity with sex workers, stating:

"We believe that all workers – including domestic and farm workers - must have the right to organize and fight for a living minimum wage, and that unions and other labor associations are critical to a healthy and thriving economy for all. Undocumented and migrant workers must be included in our labor protections, **and we stand in solidarity with sex workers' rights movements.**" (emphasis added)

Yet, there was some consternation among organizers of the women's march to include sex workers, and just under a week before the march, the statement changed from "solidarity with sex workers rights movements" to "solidarity with all those exploited for sex and labor" (Wanjuki, January 17, 2017), indicating that there are still many women's rights supporters that consider sex work and exploitation to be equivalent. Sex workers on Twitter immediately castigated the march, and organizers noticed: they added back the support for sex workers' rights movements, but not before they added a sentence stating "We recognize that exploitation for sex and labor in all forms is a violation of human rights." Indeed, the women's march was heavily chastised for this dampening of their initial radical move to stand in solidarity with sex workers.

Clearly, this seemingly endless debate is far from over. While sex worker rights activists, in conjunction with some forward thinking advocates, allies, and yes, human service nonprofits have moved their agenda toward decriminalization (as well as anti-criminalization), there is still a long way to go towards full acceptance.

## APPENDIX 1A

### *Working for Social Change: How Nonprofits Work Together to Enact Social Change for Individuals in the Sex Trade*

I am here to conduct a study about how and why human service nonprofits and social movement organizations work with advocacy organizations, specifically in regards to efforts that may improve the lives of individuals in the sex trade. I am hoping that this research will help to improve our understanding of how organizations working towards social justice work together in policy advocacy efforts, as well as in efforts to improve services and representation for vulnerable populations.

Before we begin, I would like to take a minute to explain why I am inviting you to participate and what I will be doing with the information you provide to me. Please stop me at any time if you have any questions. After I've told you a bit more about my project, you can decide whether or not you would like to participate.

Participation should take about 45-60 minutes. Participation is on a purely voluntary basis. You will be asked to answer specific questions about your organization, and how it has experienced collaboration and advocacy within the field of sex trafficking and the sex trade, as well as your advocacy efforts broadly. I will also ask a short survey about your perceptions about individuals in the sex trade.

I am hoping that this research will contribute to the ongoing discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of non-profit involvement in advocacy, as well as how advocacy organizations seek to gain the support of human service nonprofits in their advocacy work. No personal questions will be asked. All questions will be about the organization, and your perspective about the organization.

If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to answer any questions, please feel free to refuse. If at any time you would like to stop participating, that is fine. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation.

I would like to tape record this interview so as to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. This recording will be uploaded on a password-protected computer, and will be permanently deleted immediately after transcription. If you would prefer not to be taped, please let me know.

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Theresa Anasti, 312-613-6655 or at [tanasti@uchicago.edu](mailto:tanasti@uchicago.edu). You may also contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Mosley, who is located in the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, at 969 E. 60<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago, IL, 60637. She may be contacted at [mosley@uchicago.edu](mailto:mosley@uchicago.edu).

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel your rights have been violated, you can contact the following office at the University of Chicago:

School of Social Service Administration  
University of Chicago  
969 E. 60<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chicago, IL 60637  
Phone: (773) 834-0402  
Email: [SSAIRB@uchicago.edu](mailto:SSAIRB@uchicago.edu)

Are you interested in participating in this study? Do you have any questions?

*Consent to Record Interview*

(Question should be posed at the start of the recording)

May I record this interview?

*Consent to Quote from Interview*

I may wish to quote from this interview either in the presentations or scholarly articles resulting from this work. We will never refer to you individually by your real name. We can also make up a pseudonym for your organization if you prefer.

Do you agree to allow me to quote from this interview?

## APPENDIX 1B

### Interview Guide-Advocacy Organizations

#### ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. In your own words, can you tell me what the mission and goals are of your organization?
  - a. Can you tell me when and how the organization got started?
  - b. PROBE ON the definition the organization has surrounding sex work and/or prostitution (ONLY IF NOT OBVIOUS IN THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION)
  - c. PROBE ON definition of social justice
  - d. PROBE ON definition of feminism.
  - e. Tell me about your organization's current advocacy goals.
    - i. Are there any specific legislative campaigns that your organization is working on?
      1. PROBE ON whether these campaigns are short-term or long term.
2. How involved are former or current [prostitutes/sex workers/sex trafficking victims] in the decision making of your organization?

#### COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

3. Can you tell me about any times your organization has worked together with a social service organization?
  - a. What types of social service organizations does your organization work together with? What does your organization look for when wanted to work together with someone?
    - i. Size of Budget? Field? Professionalization?
  - b. What types of things do you work on with them?
    - i. Specific advocacy campaigns, or other ongoing tasks?
4. How does your organization typically recruit possible organizations to work with? Or do they come to the organization to request working together with your organization?
  - a. Email? Telephone? Event networking?
    - i. Do you find that they are often receptive to these efforts?
  - b. What does your organization typically want human service nonprofits to do during times when you might work together?
  - c. How is that the same or different from what human service nonprofits actually do while working together?
  - d. Can you tell me the names of the two organizations that you work with most often?
  - e. Has there ever been an organization that has denied a request from your organization to work together?
    - i. Did they say why?
    - ii. Do you mind telling me the name of this organization?

5. Of all time you have worked with an organization, which organization(s) do you think have been the most beneficial to your organization's advocacy efforts?
  - a. Why?
6. What do you find most helpful about working together with these organizations?
7. What frustrates you the most about working together with these organizations?
8. Are there any types of social service organizations that you would not seek to work with?
  - a. Why?
9. What is your organization's relationship with government officials like?
  - a. PROBE ON government officials' reaction to organization's goals.
  - b. PROBE ON methods and frequency of contact.
  - c. PROBE ON their goals when contacting government officials.
  - d. PROBE ON what they think government officials' goals should be regarding their constituent population.
10. Could you describe any conferences, panels, or trainings that you or your staff have attended over the past 12 months?
  - a. How many do you or your staff normally attend per year?
  - b. PROBE ON goals of events
  - c. PROBE ON human service nonprofits that have attended these events
11. Tell me about your organization's relationship with the media.
  - a. Does your organization have any standing media contacts? (television, newspaper, radio, bloggers)
12. Thanks for taking the time to answer our questions. I just have a few simple questions before we are done:
  - a. What is your educational and professional background?
  - b. What percent of your organization has college degree or above? What about a master's degree or above?
  - c. (IF NOT OBVIOUS) Do you mind telling me your race and gender?
  - d. When did you become involved in the organization?
  - e. (IF NOT INTERVIEWING ED) When did the ED become involved in your organization?
  - f. What is your current budget?
  - g. What are the sources of your budget?
  - h. How many staff members/volunteers do you have?
  - i. Can you describe the racial and ethnic makeup of your staff?
  - j. Is any of your staff made up of current or former individuals that work in the sex industry?



## APPENDIX 1C

### *Working for Social Change: How Human Service Nonprofits and Advocacy Organizations Work Together to Help Individuals in the Sex Trade*

I am here to conduct a study about how and why human service nonprofits work with advocacy organizations, specifically in regards to efforts that may improve the lives of individuals in the sex trade. I am hoping that this research will help to improve our understanding of how advocacy organizations work with human service organizations in ongoing policy advocacy efforts, as well as in efforts to improve services and representation for vulnerable populations.

Before we begin, I would like to take a minute to explain why I am inviting you to participate and what I will be doing with the information you provide to me. Please stop me at any time if you have any questions. After I've told you a bit more about my project, you can decide whether or not you would like to participate.

Participation should take about 45-60 minutes. Participation is on a purely voluntary basis. You will be asked to answer specific questions about your organization, and how it has experienced collaboration and advocacy within the field of sex trafficking and the sex trade broadly.

I am hoping that this research will contribute to the ongoing discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of human service nonprofits' involvement in advocacy, as well as how advocacy organizations seek to gain the support of human service nonprofits in their advocacy work. No personal questions will be asked. All questions will be about the organization, and your perspective about the organization.

If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to answer any questions, please feel free to refuse. If at any time you would like to stop participating, that is fine. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation.

I would like to tape record this interview so as to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. This recording will be uploaded on a password-protected computer, and will be permanently deleted immediately after transcription. If you would prefer not to be taped, please let me know.

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Theresa Anasti, 312-613-6655 or at [tanasti@uchicago.edu](mailto:tanasti@uchicago.edu). You may also contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Mosley, who is located in the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, at 969 E. 60<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago, IL, 60637. She may be contacted at [mosley@uchicago.edu](mailto:mosley@uchicago.edu).

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel your rights have been violated, you can contact the following office at the University of Chicago:

School of Social Service Administration  
University of Chicago  
969 E. 60<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chicago, IL 60637  
Phone: (773) 834-0402  
Email: [SSAIRB@uchicago.edu](mailto:SSAIRB@uchicago.edu)

Are you interested in participating in this study? Do you have any questions?

*Consent to Record Interview*  
(Question should be posed at the start of the recording)

May I record this interview?

*Consent to Quote from Interview*

I may wish to quote from this interview either in the presentations or scholarly articles resulting from this work. If you would like, we can use the actual organization's name, but will never refer to you individually by your real name. But unless specifically told that we can use the actual organization's name, the organization will be deidentified in scholarly publications. Do you agree to allow me to quote from this interview?

## APPENDIX 1D

### Interview Guide-Human Service Nonprofits

#### ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. In your own words, can you tell me the mission and goals of your organization?
  - a. How would your organization define client success?
  - b. Do you consider your organization to be a feminist organization? Why or why not?
  - c. How would your organization define social justice for your clients?
2. To your knowledge, have any of your organization's clients traded sexual services for money, housing, drugs, food or other tangible benefits?
  - a. What percentage (or how many if small organization)?
  - b. What effect (if any) do you think that the sex industry has on your organization's clients?
  - c. What percentage of these clients do you believe have been explicitly trafficked, that is, through force, fraud, or coercion by an outside party been made to perform sexual services?
3. If a staff member discovered that a client were involved in the sex industry, how would the organization respond?
  - a. How would staff handle a client who expresses a wish to leave the sex industry? What about a client who is in the sex industry, but does not wish to leave?
4. Have you, or have any of your staff been a part of any conferences, panels, or similar events relating to sex trafficking or the sex industry?
  - a. If yes, please describe these events.
  - b. How many do you normally attend per year?
  - c. PROBE ON goal and mission of events.

#### SERVICE IDEOLOGY

Now I'm going to ask some questions about beliefs and opinions around different social issues and social service practices, including poverty, substance abuse treatment and prostitution. Please answer according to your organization's stated beliefs and/or policies. If your organization does not have a stated belief or policy on the question at hand, please answer according to your beliefs.

5. What would your organization believe are the three biggest causes of poverty?<sup>51</sup>
6. What would your organization say is the biggest problem or concern facing your clients?
7. In many service settings, treatment for things such as substance use and engagement in sex work relies on the individual to cease engagement in unhealthy behaviors. This is seen in program models such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Prostitutes Anonymous (define programs if the service provider expresses lack of

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<sup>51</sup> Question 5 adopted from Reingold and Liu (2009).

knowledge). To what extent would your organization agree or disagree that this model of treatment is the most effective approach, and why?

8. To what extent would staff at your organization be willing or unwilling to work with a client who was not ready to quit using drugs or engaging in sex work but who instead wanted to try to moderate their engagement in these activities? <sup>52</sup>
9. What would your organization believe is the major reason individuals engage in sex work?
10. Some people argue that sex work or prostitution is akin to violence against women and children. To what extent does your organization agree with that, and why? <sup>53</sup>
11. Some people argue that sex work or prostitution can be a legitimate form of labor individuals can enter into to provide for themselves or their families. To what extent does your organization agree with that, and why?
12. What is the most important service an organization can provide for an individual that engages in sexual services for tangible benefits? What about one that has been a victim of sex trafficking?

#### COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

13. Are you currently working with any organizations that advocate on behalf of sex workers or sex trafficking victims?
  - a. PROBE FOR ORGANIZATIONS
14. Is your organization working with, or has it ever worked with these organizations? (IF YES CONTINUE WITH THIS SECTION, IF NO, GO TO “IF NO COLLABORATION”, Q. 15)
  - a. How did your working with this organization get started?
    - i. [if they don't know, probe on whether there is another staff member that would now]
  - b. Who initiated contact? How did that happen?
  - c. Why did you decide to work with this organization?
    - i. PROBE on whether they agree with the organization's stance on sex work/prostitution, if not clear in ideology section.
15. What is your organization currently working together with other organizations on, or what has it worked together on in the past?
16. Can you tell me the specifics of working together with these organizations? For example, do you meet and if so, how often?
  - a. What happens when your work together with these organizations?
    - i. PROBE on how organizations share resources (material, human) and information?
    - ii. PROBE depending on their answer to Q. 14. For example, ask about how they share ownership, and the specifics of what they do while working together, as well as the advocacy organization.

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<sup>52</sup> Questions 6 and 7 adopted from Moore and Mattaini (2014).

<sup>53</sup> Question 9 adopted from Levin and Peled (2011).

- b. Have there been any agreements or disagreements during the time when you work with one or both of these organizations?
  - c. Does your organization normally work together just on specific campaigns, or is this collaboration ongoing?
  - d. What drew your organization to advocacy on behalf of individuals in the sex trade?
  - e. What does your organization take into consideration in deciding whether or not to be involved with another organization to work together for purposes of advocacy?
17. What are the benefits of working with the advocacy organization for your organization?
- a. PROBE ON: gaining funding for services, networking with other organizations, access to political officials
18. What are the drawbacks for your organization?
19. Who generally works as the liaison on behalf of the advocacy organization at your organization?

IF THEY ONLY COLLABORATE WITH ONE ORGANIZATION, REITERATE MISSION OF OTHER GROUP

20. What are your thoughts on the mission of this organization?
- a. Would your organization consider working with them?
    - i. Why or why not?
  - b. What would you think are the benefits and/or drawbacks to this organization's mission? Does this differ from how other members of your organization might perceive this mission?
21. Does your organization work with other organizations for advocacy purposes on any other issues?
- a. How did your organizations start working together?
  - b. What is the purpose of working together with these organizations?
  - c. What kinds of campaigns have your organizations worked together on?
  - d. What have been the benefits of working together?
  - e. Have there been any drawbacks to working together?

IF ORGANIZATION HAS WORKED TOGETHER WITH ONE OF THE ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS AND ANSWERED ABOVE QUESTIONS, SKIP TO Q. 24

22. Did you or your staff consider working with either of the organizations that I have mentioned?
- a. If yes: Why do you think you all have not yet worked together?
  - b. If no: Why not?
23. Do you think that working together with one or both of these organizations would be beneficial to your organization?
- a. Why or why not?
24. Do you think that there would be drawbacks to working with either of these organizations?
- a. Why or why not?

25. Is your organization working with any other organizations for the purposes of advocacy (not service provision)?
- a. How did you all start working together?
  - b. Why did you start working with these organization(s)?
  - c. What kinds of campaigns has your organization worked together on?
  - d. What have been the benefits of working together?
    - i. Probe on what the benefits to working together were.
  - e. Have there been any drawbacks to working with these organizations?
    - i. Probe on what the drawbacks to working together were.

Thanks for taking the time to answer our questions. I just have a few simple questions before we are done:

- a. What is your educational and professional background?
- b. What percentage of your staff has a college degree or above? What about a master's degree or above?
- c. When did you join the organization?
- d. (IF NOT INTERVIEWING ED) When did the ED join the organization?
- e. What is your organizational current budget for fiscal year 2015?
- f. What percentage of your current budget comes from government sources?
- g. (IF NOT OBVIOUS) Do you mind telling me your race and gender?
- h. How many paid staff members does your organization have? How many unpaid volunteers or interns does it have?
- i. What is the racial and/or ethnic makeup of your staff?
- j. How many clients does your organization serve?
- k. Is any of your staff made up of current or former sex workers, or victims of sex trafficking?

## Harm Reduction Acceptability Scale Items

For each of the items, participants are instructed to indicate the number that corresponds to their organization's attitude and policy of the workplace. Reverse-coded items contain an asterisk.

First, does your organization have any programs that draw on the principles of harm reduction (IF NOT ALREADY DISCUSSED)?

1-Strongly Agree

2-Agree

3-Neither Agree nor Disagree

4-Disagree

5-Disagree Strongly

- (1) \*People in the sex trade who will not accept abstinence as their treatment goal are in denial.
- (2) \*Instead of teaching sex workers safer sex practices, and ways to enhance their safety, it is imperative that the service providers' ultimate goal should be for the client to leave the sex industry.
- (3) A choice of treatment outcome goals (for example, abstinence, reduced involvement in sex work, safer sex practices) should be discussed with individuals in the sex trade seeking help.
- (4) \*People who live in government-funded housing must be prohibited from engaging in sex work.
- (5) Doctors should be encouraged to give knowledge about safer sex practices to sex workers, as opposed to encouraging them to leave the sex trade, as doing so reduces problems such as crime and health risks.
- (6) \*Women in the sex trade cannot be good mothers to infants and young children.
- (7) Sex workers should be given honest information about safe sex practices, and ways to appropriately screen clients for safety measures (for example, proper use of condoms and lubricant, the presence of unsafe client black lists, sex worker support groups).
- (8) People in the sex trade who are not willing to accept abstinence as their treatment outcome goal should be offered treatment that aims to reduce the harm associated with their continued involvement in the sex trade.
- (9) \*In most cases, nothing can be done to motivate clients in denial except to wait for them to "hit bottom".
- (10) It is acceptable to provide safer sex and safety materials in order to reduce HIV/STI rates and other social problems associated with sex work.
- (11) \*Prisons should not provide safer sex materials in order for inmates who exchange sex for tangible benefits to remain safe.
- (12) As long as clients are making progress towards their treatment goals, human service programs should not kick clients out that are involved in the sex trade.
- (13) \*Measures designed to reduce the harm associated with work in the sex trade are acceptable only if they eventually lead clients to pursue abstinence.
- (14) People in the sex trade may be more likely to seek professional help if they are offered at least some treatment options that do not focus on abstinence.
- (15) \*Alternative modes of solicitation outside of the street, such as Backpage, Eros.com, Redbook among others, should be prohibited and shut down. (Note: if respondent is unclear as

to what these are, describe them as venues for individuals in the sex trade to advertise indoor sex work).

(16) People who have been successful at staying safe in the sex trade should be trained to teach other sex workers how to engage in safer sex and to use safety practices (for example, condom use and client screening methods).

(17) Making safer sex materials available to sex workers is likely to reduce the rate of HIV infection.

(18) \*Abstinence is the only acceptable treatment option for sex workers.

(19) It is possible to be a sex worker and use safe sex practices.

(20) Pamphlets for educating sex workers about safer sex practices should be detailed and explicit, even if these pamphlets would be offensive to some people.

(21) \*Individuals in the sex trade should only be allowed to engage in sex work to the extent that they are simultaneously trying to leave the sex trade.

(22) Sex workers who are not willing to accept abstinence as a treatment goal at the beginning of treatment should be given easy access to safer sex materials to reduce the spread of HIV and other STIs.

(23) \*Women who engage in sex work during pregnancy should automatically lose custody of their babies.

(24) Sex workers should be praised for making changes such as engaging in STI and HIV testing, increased condom use, and progress toward educational goals.

(25) \*Abstinence is the only acceptable treatment goal for sex workers.



APPENDIX 2  
Respondent List

TABLE 3: HUMAN SERVICE NONPROFITS

<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Budget (Expenses FY 2015)</b>	<b>Percentage of Budget From Government (self-reported)</b>	<b>Person (s) Interviewed</b>	<b>Harm Reduction Score (out of 5)</b>
HIV/AIDS	Very Large	30	Program Director	3.8
Gender Based Violence	Large	50	Executive Director	3.56
Immigration	Very Large	99	Executive Director	3.96
LGBTQ Services	Large	99	Resource Manager	4.96
Legal Services	Large	0	Supervising Attorney	4.6
Employment Services	Medium	38	Program Manager	4.6
LGBTQ Services	Very Large	80	Program Director	4.88
Immigration	Medium	0	Program Director	4.08
Mental Health	Very Small	0	Executive Director	5
LGBTQ Services	Large	61	Executive Director	N/A
Substance Use	Medium	75	Executive Director	4.84
Health Services	Medium	0	Program Manager	4.6
Health Services	Very Large	90	Chief Operating Officer	4.04
Legal Services	Small	0	Staff Attorney	4
Homelessness	Large	60	Clinical Director	4.84
Legal Services	Medium	75	Staff Attorney	4.32
Individuals in the Sex Trade	Medium	0	Analyst	4.08
Substance Use	Large	70	Executive Director	3.6
Substance Use	Very Large	71	Program Director	5

TABLE 3, CONTINUED

<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Budget (Expenses FY 2015)</b>	<b>Percentage of Budget From Government (self-reported)</b>	<b>Person (s) Interviewed</b>	<b>Harm Reduction Score (out of 5)</b>
Homelessness	Very Large	70	Program Director	4.52
Health Services	Large	80	Executive Director	3.76
Homelessness	Large	71	Executive Director	4.64
Legal Services**	Very Large	63	Staff Attorney	4.84
Mental Health	Large	0	Program Director	4.52
Gender Based Violence	Large	40	Director	4.28
Homelessness*	Large	32	Executive Director	4.76
Gender Based Violence	Large	55	Program Director	4.76
Homelessness	Large	50	Program Director	4.82
Poverty	Medium	13	Program Director	3.64
HIV/AIDS	Very Small	0	Program Director	4.92
Gender Based Violence	Very Large	85	Program Director	4.68
Youth Employment	Large	70	Program Director	N/A
Gender Based Violence	Small	0	Executive Director	N/A
Individuals in the Sex Trade	Medium	0	Executive Director	3.84
Homelessness*	Large	32	Program Director	4.76
Youth in the Sex Trade	Very Small	0	Executive Director	N/A
Legal Services**	Very Large	63	Staff Attorney	4.84
LGBTQ Services	Large	40	Program Director	N/A

^To keep organizations anonymous, budget is reported according to relative size. Very Small: under \$25,000, Small: \$25,000 to \$50,000, Medium: \$50,001 to \$1,000,000, Large: \$1,000,001 to \$10,000,000, Very Large: \$10,000,000+

\*Individuals are from same organization—I interviewed two people because one was referred as having expert knowledge on the topic.

\*\*Individuals are from same organization—I interviewed two people because one was referred as having expert knowledge on the topic.

TABLE 4: GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Budget (Expenses FY 2015)</b>	<b>Percentage of Budget From Government</b>	<b>Person (s) Interviewed</b>	<b>Harm Reduction Score (out of 5)</b>
Government Department	Very Large	100	Researcher	N/A
Government Department	Very Large	100	Service Staff member	4.88

TABLE 5: END DEMAND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Budget (Expenses FY 2015)</b>	<b>Percentage of Budget From Government</b>	<b>Person (s) Interviewed</b>
Advocacy	Large	0	Policy Director
Advocacy	Small	0	Executive Director
Advocacy	Very Small	0	Director
Advocacy	Large	0	Policy Associate

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