On the Line: Work and Choice

DEBRA A. CASTILLO

DEBRA A. CASTILLO is Stephen H. Weiss Presidential Fellow, Emerson Hinchliff Professor of Hispanic Studies, and professor of comparative literature at Cornell University. She specializes in contemporary narrative from the Spanish-speaking world (including the United States), gender studies, and cultural theory. Her most recent books are *Redreaming America: Toward a Bilingual American Culture* (State U of New York P, 2005) and *Cartographies of Affect: Across Borders in South Asia and the Americas*, coedited by Kavita Panjabi (Worldview, 2011).

WHEN I WAS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SPECIAL ISsue, it was suggested that I meditate on a long-term research project I did in collaboration with the public-health scholar María Gudelia Rangel Gómez and the demographer Armando Rosas Solís, on people working in prostitution in Tijuana, a city on the United States–Mexico border. That work began in the 1990s and continued through the middle of the last decade, producing three articles on women and two on transvestite sex workers.[1] Looking over the raw survey data and interview transcripts in preparation for this article impressed on me once again how these people are engaged in what Saskia Sassen calls "survival circuits" between the global South and global cities like Los Angeles and Tijuana, some of them located in the North, some not. These sex workers come from all over the Mexican Republic, migrating to Tijuana—a city both Third World and global—for reasons of economic necessity, and often their stories include low-wage labor in the United States as well as participation in the informal economy in the northern border area to supplement (or mask) their primary income. Regardless of other factors, the people we surveyed and interviewed express an understanding that to live means to work and that the work they are doing is precisely *work*: not organized labor, not a career path. They know that their bodies are made marginal or invisible and their voices go unheard. At the same time, while their lives may seem unimaginably harsh to many of us, in their stories they often present themselves as rational actors, making the best choices they can from among limited options for themselves and their families.

The recent emphasis in popular and academic studies on trafficking, especially sex trafficking across international borders—but

[© 2012 BY THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA]

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

also other forms of deceptive or illegal labor trafficking—adds another layer to this discussion, since trafficking takes away the element of choice (limited as it may be) from work. As Sassen notes, "Prostitution and migrant labor are increasingly popular ways to make a living; illegal trafficking in women and children for the sex industry, and in all kinds of people as laborers, is an increasingly popular way to make a profit" (265). Rhacel Salazar Parreñas's recent, wonderful book on Filipinas working in Japan as "entertainers," Sarah Stillman's exposé of the deceptive practices that subcontractors engage in to supply the United States army and air force in Iraq and Afghanistan with South Asian and African service workers, and the annual reports to Congress on trafficking in persons are cases in point. These too are stories about the workings of global capital, and they serve as sobering reminders about what it means to be a low-wage worker in a global economy. They comment on and elicit judgment about consumers (mostly heterosexual men), about human rights and human exploitation. Sassen's concise statement, furthermore, highlights the difference between agents (making a living) and consumer objects (from which others make a profit), while showing that they are inextricably linked.

In the same article, she also thinks about the macro and micro geographies of globalization as well as the migrant circuits of low-wage laborers and exploited peoples, reminding us, for instance, of the legally employed, high-salaried transnational whose homelife is made more comfortable by an undocumented maid, perhaps even a maid from the same home culture (259). These intersecting social spaces of employment help us to think about the permeability of borders and the rigidity of class divisions. It is not, of course, a circuit limited to investment bankers and Silicon Valley executives; many academics also feel that the only way to carve out space for their academic work is by hiring nannies and housekeepers and gardeners. Sassen's analysis in this respect complements that of Judith Butler, who in her book on "precarious life" asks us to make explicit our systems of value when confronting human rights abuses and tragic loss: "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives?" (20). In this presumed hierarchy, the life and work of a sometime maid, sometime prostitute, her lack of social capital, her physical vulnerability, rank low. She belongs to a class thought of as surplus humanity on both sides of international borders.

I would add to this analysis that the United States–Mexico border, famously a testing ground between a developing nation and a developed one, also serves as a site of contestation around the stakes in each nation's discursive practices concerning labor, rights, ethics, and law. Borders bring these discourses into friction, since they highlight the subtly (or not so subtly) different valences of these concepts in different national settings. With respect to the concerns around sex work and sex trafficking, while weighing these frames seriously, we must remain conceptually alert to avoid a common pitfall of advocacy work in the humanities—what one sex-worker group calls "tragedy porn" (Jeffreys et al. 279): the solicitation of and a certain intoxication with the very marginality and precariousness we decry.[2] Especially because ethics has become such a fashionable area of study in recent years, we need to continually recall our social and disciplinary biases when our academic work intersects these traditionally stigmatized topics.[3]

How do differences in the national legal codes of Mexico and the United States intersect with a presumed universal natural law? What is the relation between the human and rights? What is work, and what is a career? How do we mediate discourses of rescue and choice? What are the gendered effects of survival circuits of migration? And—more banal, perhaps—what am I, a humanist, doing on these national and disciplinary borders?

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

What is my responsibility to these people who have shared their stories with us?

Let us follow up on the example of trafficking. Gretchen Soderlund makes the excellent point that the global "War Against Trafficking" has been largely defined and directed by the United States and was given greater national attention after George W. Bush's 2003 annual address to the United Nations. Soderlund sees this address as a familiar bait-and-switch tactic to deflect criticism of the United States war in Iraq. In a well-rehearsed variant on the melodramatic narrative of tragedy porn, Bush dedicates a third of the speech to a call to action in which he evokes the evils of sex slavery: the filthy, prison-like brothels; the terrified, underage victims; the virtuous rescue operations (76–77). No one can doubt that sex trafficking exists and is a terrible crime, yet Soderlund asks us to think a bit more carefully about the political sleight of hand represented by Bush's speech, as well as the loaded language of rescue used by many advocacy groups, much of it following from unexplored presumptions about Third World disorder and First World virtue, implicitly dividing sex workers into nonintersecting groups of evil sinners and innocent victims.[4]

Throughout its history on the peripheries of two nations, the border city of Tijuana has suffered from a general stigma as precisely such a disordered Third World site, a "sin city" for visitors from the United States and Mexico. Hence, it has been relegated to the fringes of the Mexican body politic and rejected by the mainstream United States as a contaminated, abject, dangerous milieu, with all the disadvantages for its inhabitants and all the potential titillation for national and international visitors that such a reputation brings. This reputation for lawlessness is echoed in the imaginations of sex tourists from the United States, where Tijuana frequently figures as a sort of cinematic Wild West outpost full of illicit sex and illegal drugs. Thus, "researchers" into the world of paid sex in that city comment online that establishments such as the red-zone bar Adelita, which attracts a largely international clientele, are pure "South of the Border" and like brothels in Westerns. The attraction for the United States tourist is the recovery of a virility associated with a pure, Hollywood version of the past, one presumably lost in the modern nation.

From the perspective of central Mexico, on the other hand, the problem with the border can be ascribed to a different kind of Americanization, one bringing not a Hollywood past but a postapocalyptic future. Carlos Monsiváis, for example, underlines the political, social, and cultural costs of the traditional division between Mexico City and the rest of the country: "Desde principios de siglo . . . cunde una idea: la provincia es 'irredimible,' quedarse es condenarse" 'Since the beginning of the [twentieth] century . . . the idea has propagated that the provinces are "irredeemable," that to stay is to be condemned' (197; my trans.). Contaminated by a too frequent contact with the United States, the inhabitants of the border region have presumably lost the moral compass that still guides the rest of the country and have fallen into the evils of consumerism, of which the sex trade is a clichéd example.

Tijuana is, of course, a global city. The 1990s industrial boom made it a magnet for unskilled laborers, and while from the United States it may resemble a Third World outpost, it remains even in the second decade of the twenty-first century one of the most prosperous cities in Mexico. Taking into account this globalized quality, the Argentine sociologist Néstor García Canclini provocatively argues that Tijuana, along with New York City, represents "uno de los mayores laboratorios de la posmodernidad" 'one of the biggest laboratories of postmodernity' in the world, a comparison that New Yorkers would likely find bizarre (*Culturas híbridas* 293; *Hybrid Cultures* 233). In the nonexchanges between

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the United States and Mexico in Tijuana, the frisson of the other on the United States' side is the encounter with its past; on the Mexican side, it is the Americanized future—"The manager of one assembly plant by the airport predicts that all of Mexico will soon look like Tijuana. . . . Tijuana is an industrial park on the outskirts of Minneapolis" (Rodriguez 94).

New York, Minneapolis, Wild West brothel: what they have in common is a claim to attention based on a shared understanding of an economic system that comes from the North and an attendant implicit hierarchy of rights by which certain lives in or from the presumed Third World are qualified as surplus population. This is the familiar neoliberal context of excess and loss that Anne McClintock sees as integral to colonial and former colonial powers. It also, notes Sassen, describes the location and the condition of survival of these migrant bodies. For the people working in the many bars and on the streets in the legally constituted red zone, living in Tijuana involves ethical choices linked to their human need for food, shelter, and, more amorphously, a connection to fellow human beings, a sense of community. The border makes these issues more salient because it is precisely the nature of a border to create opportunities for friction between two worlds and competing worldviews.

One of many reports to the United States government on sex trafficking, Sheldon Zhang's study of Tijuana makes fascinating reading. It turns out, against the researcher's original expectations, that sex trafficking seems not much of a problem there, something Zhang ascribes to a facet of globalization different from the one usually adumbrated in federal reports on the issue. He writes, "Findings in this study clearly point to a complex social and legal problem brought about by an increasingly globalized and commercialized world. . . . [C]ommercial sexual activity is far more complex than what is frequently portrayed in the news media or by advocacy groups" (10). While sympathetic to the intense commitment of individuals working in the advocacy groups he surveyed, he found little evidence of coercion in Tijuana or in San Diego and worries that grant recipients are encouraged to produce skewed reports that describe sex trafficking as widespread, with service needs that outstrip their resources, so as to maintain their funding levels (23, 90). Thus, if this advocacy is defined by the long-term goal of its own obsolescence (we strive for the day when there will no longer be any need for such a service), in the short term, ironically, its efforts are premised on a robust sex-worker population active in multiple places. Zhang is rightly concerned that dedicated groups are falling into irresponsible behaviors and that United States government pressure foregrounds trafficking as a key illustration of the Third World invasion taking over the country and corrupting its morality.

Popular media reports on the problem buttress this fear, along with the related, underlying conviction that virtue in the United States is threatened, by emphasizing the rescue of victimized women and girls, without calling for any real projects for creating viable working-class labor options. Speaking to this issue, Elena Reynaga, president of RedTraSex, an Argentina-based, international organization of Latin American sex workers, admonishes journalists for perpetuating what her group calls "the rescue myth," arguing, "We chose sex work from those jobs a working-class woman can do. . . . There should be programs for women who decide to leave sex work, but [they] should be viable and serious alternatives, not handouts" (*Myths*). Reynaga rightly points out that offering rescue and charity rather than training is an unsustainable model for supporting real workers: the former engage the easier-to-evoke liberal concerns about social justice; the latter requires rethinking of labor standards.

For his part, Zhang notes a dearth of standard, empirical research by scholars in this

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

field, who too often seem to have a political motivation for their work, fail to recognize their own race and gender biases, and base conclusions on little evidence (23). There is also an affective element to much of this academic inquiry, nicely parsed by the Australian sex-worker group Scarlet Alliance: "For example, when we speak about the low prevalence of incidents of trafficking in the sex industry, we are accused of being in denial about migrant sex workers' lives" (Jeffreys et al. 279). While Zhang does not make the explicit connection, this accusation echoes Sassen's analysis, as well as Chantal Mouffe's perceptive linking of ethics talk and globalization: "ethics and morality have recently become very fashionable. . . . This moralization of society is . . . a consequence of the lack of any credible political alternative to the current dominance of neoliberalism" (85).

In Mexico sex work is legal, unlike in most parts of the United States, where criminalization shapes discourse at all levels. Thus, studies in the United States often begin from a premise of illegality, which underpins an understanding of sex work as a product of exploitation, deception, pimping, and trafficking, whereas in Mexico the discursive and social structure is different.[5] This is not to deny the fact of exploitation in Mexico, only to point out that the disciplinary discursive structures coming from the North can severely misrepresent information derived from the South, and scholarly ethics demands scholarly responsibility. For instance, Zhang interviews a manager of a high-class establishment who claims, "[W]e always have a waiting list of women," including women from major cities throughout Mexico and from San Diego, who send pictures and videos in advance as part of a formal job application. The establishment reviews the applications and makes travel arrangements for the women chosen (76)—a twist on what United States researchers might see as trafficking, and one that includes migration from the United States to Mexico for better job opportunities.

Sometimes in contexts like these we in the North see only losses, while the workers tend to see a balance sheet of losses and gains. "I am not selling myself cheap," one woman tells Zhang's interviewer, insisting on her professionalism. "I take my job seriously" (26). Like our earlier work, which Zhang cites, his 2010 study found that the vast majority of these women chose the sex industry as the best of their limited options (53), and he adds later, "[T]hese women exude agency and resiliency, as opposed to self-pity or blame. . . . Even after repeated probing by interviewers, the majority of these women did not perceive themselves as helpless victims of any abuse. . . . They were clear-headed and focused" (102–03).[6] Our in-depth interviews with female sex workers track exhaustion and disgust more than fear about their working conditions.[7] At the same time, the narratives indicate ambivalence when they think of their circumstances and their family's needs.

The first lesson that the border teaches us, then, is to avoid categorical statements and to carefully parse presumed confrontations between the discourse of universal rights and that of agency. From one perspective, these are abject subjects, whose interpolation in neoliberal economies deprives them of choice. Yet they don't quite see it that way, even though they are well aware that their choices are limited and even if choice per se is always a chancy prospect for underclass women.[8] In interviews with them, one of the questions Rangel asks is, Why did you start working in this scene?[9] Their answers are instructive.

Several describe decisions based on cross-border economies, including abandonment by partners who crossed into the United States and no longer supported them or a decision that prostitution in Tijuana is preferable to housework in San Diego. One woman comments, "Because my husband and I separated and I stayed behind with the four girls and he went to the other side to the United States . . . I wanted to become independent. I didn't

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

want anyone to tell me what to do. I wanted to raise my children. But I hadn't gone to school or anything because I married really young. And so I went around working at this and that until I ended up here." Another says, "There have been times I've gone to San Diego, to Los Angeles to clean houses, so it's pretty rare that I come here. I think for the last two years I've come down once or twice a month or every two months. Very periodically, but since I don't like to have any problems, I almost always come down to pick up something, but I almost don't need to." It may come as a shock to many of us, who think of ourselves as progressive and benevolent employers, to learn that women who have cleaned our houses or worked as nannies to our children would, if given the choice, prefer the work of paid sex with our men—for financial reasons; to remain in their communities, where they are comfortable with the culture and can speak their own language; to retain the opportunity to raise their children locally rather than entrust them to a faraway caretaker.[10]

Many women focus on sex work as a viable alternative that provides them with a better income, an efficient way to pay off debts, or a nest egg; as one woman says, "I always come and turn up here when there is a need, because I work and I take care of my people, because I don't like anyone to loan me anything." Many women point to a general gender bias in low-wage work, unfair hiring practices, ethnic discrimination, and a lack of protection from sexual harassment for lower-class women: "Mostly what pushes me is the lack of income. Little income and few opportunities. And when a woman is over thirty-five, thirty-four years old, it's hard to find a job. Very hard. Only if you lie and have fake papers. Even if you have the training, you are still limited professionally if you are over thirty." And a final, telling comment:

> It was precisely the same thing as my whole life: the economic situation more than anything else. Because it is not for nothing, but it often influences you that men do not respect you at work. When one is working, one wants to have a calm life, but you have to constantly change jobs every little while because otherwise you have to sleep with the boss, not to mention that they only pay you the going rate for a salary. All sorts of things. And you find yourself becoming his mistress and his personal prostitute. The thing is, I always analyzed that and how it was possible that I fought it so much. And the long and short of it is that I was offended. . . . The fact is that . . . in those days when one was alone with a small child, and a widow, the guys were harassing you sexually all the time. And you say to yourself, Why? You're offending me. And then it turns out that you have to do it after all because besides the fact that you need the money, in any case you are doing it after all. And you don't even have the liberty to do it or not.

The clear-eyed evaluation by this woman points to a continuity in Mexican low-wage labor, and particularly in the pressures she experienced in service industries (she describes working in restaurants, working in a shoe store, cleaning). In comparing kinds of service industries—and in sex work as well "el servicio" is what the worker provides for the client—she thoughtfully evaluates the loss of choice in one set of working conditions, along with the paradoxically greater choice she experiences in the conventionally morally reprehensible industry.

Moreover, if we think across globalized cities, from Tijuana to New York, and analyze the question of service in isolation, removing the stigma of criminalization, the often moralizing tone, we can observe a rather astonishing parallel with service industry practices in the United States. For example, a sobering report by labor activists in the New York restaurant industry, one of few growth industries in the United States and one dependent on domestic laboring bodies, describes as standard practices the violation of federal wage laws, salary theft, overt racial

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and gender discrimination, and verbal and sometimes physical abuse (Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York). Another sign of our transnational, neoliberal times: one might well conclude that abusive working conditions are endemic to the service industry in general and not solely to work involving Mexican *machistas*, American johns, or sex.

If the context of the service industry in the United States helps one think about how to articulate a discourse of rights versus agency in the gendered organization of work transnationally, so too the emphasis on trafficking and rescue uncovers biases about sex work in particular. Overall, our project was deeply concerned with uncovering the ways in which unwritten prejudices shape (and sometimes deform) the so-called objective hypotheses that undergird academic work in the social and biological sciences, including epidemiology, as well as statistical modeling and mathematical analyses. This issue is not just theoretical. Since these scientific studies have an important role in defining public policy, they should accurately reflect the material under analysis or at least recognize the existence and potential effects of their own biases.

Trafficking analysis generally focuses on rescue of the women—a moral good—while paying much less attention to the reprehensible role played by the First World clients who purchase these services, men only slightly less exploitative than the traffickers. The providers and the consumers of sex services exercise choice differently. The sex worker's goal is to provide a satisfactory consumer experience, partly to make the service less onerous to perform, partly to ensure repeat clients. Here Yasmina Katsulis's recent work in Tijuana confirms our earlier conclusions. As Katsulis argues, the client employs the language of consumerism, making the choice of paid sex a form of "conspicuous consumption," a display of luxury goods for a community of heterosexual men. In addition, the men's excitement about finding a Hollywood Wild West across the border ties in with other presumptions about women's roles in what these clients imagine to be a more traditional society, anachronistically untouched by the gender-equality politics of the United States. The clients, says Katsulis, assume a "politics of difference based (incorrectly) on cultural practices and values" (217).

In a fascinating and suggestive study, Julia O'Connell Davidson expands on this observation, parsing clients' understanding of their actions with respect to natural law. This is, she notes, "not a generalized nostalgia for a mythical past . . . but a wish to reclaim very specific powers" (14). For clients, natural law defines another form of gendered rights, one that they have to negotiate alongside their claims about consumerism. Choice for the client in this respect means investment in the fantasy of a lost past where heterosexual men (rightly) controlled avenues of power. This tension between past and present, presumed traditional and modern societies, is not unique to the sex client, of course. O'Connell Davidson hastens to clarify that the "tension between rhetoric of universal rights and liberalism's basis in a social contract that is gendered, classed, and raced" means that for many Anglo-European heterosexual men "the extension of universal rights to persons of colour and women is experienced as a loss of male sovereignty and selfhood. The sex tourists . . . are certainly not alone in their disquiet, but they are distinguished by the fact that they attach such an immediate *erotic* significance to this sense of loss" (13).

Thus, in Mexico the prototypical white, heterosexual client from the United States momentarily, for the length of the service, (re)gains a fantasized superiority that he presumes is his by right of his sex, nationality, and race but that he nonetheless experiences through a knowledge of its continuous loss in the global North, since the women of his own country do not recognize or accept the natural right of male dominion. This interplay of

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

choice and loss also occurs outside the world of paid sex work; McClintock's classic study of the colonial self reminds us that under colonialism, characteristically, there is a "dread of catastrophic boundary *loss* (implosion), . . . attended by an *excess* of boundary order and fantasies of unlimited power" (26). And yet there is a significant shift of perspective. The second major thing the border teaches us is to shift our focus from the North when thinking about globalized modernity and to look to the fringes of countries and customs.[11]

Finally, the nature of interdisciplinary scholarship also raises other salient questions. In the recognition of different forms of agential action, there are implications for our work as scholars and pedagogues. What is the mission of our academic work? "[T]his conversation depends on our willingness and ability to speak and listen across many of the taken-for-granted boundaries of intellectual work . . . , respecting that such work is not simply answerable to our theory and desires" (Grossberg 291). Cary Nelson would add that the goal of the humanities today should be to "unsettle knowledge and assumptions in ways more fundamental than any exam can or should test." We take seriously the challenge to think respectfully about ethnography and epidemiology and to unsettle their claims, as we chart our path across political and class borders, across academic and service work.

In some sense, this collaborative project engages in action research rather than the more speculative forms of analysis. I have found it to be a generative experience, providing me with an opportunity for reengagement with the things I came into the academy for. It has challenged me to learn about the different ways in which knowledge is structured in other disciplines and how those knowledge structures open possibilities for thinking, even as they blind us to disciplinary limitations. *Accountability* is a buzzword these days, but it also designates a commitment and an implicit contract. We investigators coming to the world of sex work from the outside are too often apt to reduce its complexities to a single, and much flattened, vision. One of the women brought us up short with this poignant reminder: "My life is my own. I live a normal life, like you, like any other human being." We owe it to her not to be patronizing about her choices.

Notes

1. See my "Asylum" and "Interdisciplinary Work"; Castillo, Rangel Gómez, and Delgado; and Castillo, Rangel Gómez, and Rosas Solís, "Tentative Exchanges" and "Violencia." In our work we use the term *transvestite* for any biological male wearing clothing defined as female and do not make categorical distinctions between *vestidas*, transvestites, and transgender individuals. Because transvestites' access to transnational labor circuits is so different from that of the women, in this article I am unable to discuss their situation at any length.

2. "[A]s sex workers we also face deep-seeded stigmas which mean that if we don't disclose to you our stories of tragedy and the demeaning experiences we have faced, we run the risk of not being believed by you. This is what we call feminist attachment to 'tragedy porn': A desire in the feminist movement to hear, and enjoy hearing, tragic stories of hardship from sex workers" (279). A clear example engaging the United States–Mexico border is Marco Kreuzpaintner's 2007 movie *Trade*, about a sex-trafficking ring that lures women from abroad, while also kidnapping Mexican girls. The movie was based on Peter Landesman's highly praised article in the *New York Times Magazine*, "The Girls Next Door" (25 Jan. 2004). A promotional poster for the film highlights Paulina Gaitán's Adriana, an impeccably groomed schoolgirl with lowered eyes seated in front of a garish symbolic evocation of her assets salable to the pedophile buyer—reminding us of her shame (or ours, for our voyeurism). The movie follows a fast-paced hunt for the evil traffickers, ending with the heroic rescue of young Adriana before her virginity is sold.

3. Herlinghaus makes a similar point in his call for an aesthetics of sobriety in the analysis of narcoculture.

4. She writes, e.g., "The emphasis on victimization in the West is historically linked to the exigencies of activist publicity round race and gender issues in the context of a masculinist state that exalted and protected only those victims whose innocence—and distance from state-based oppression—could be established or asserted in sympathetic terms . . . [casting] women as victims in need of protection from harm rather than as subjects deserving of positive rights" (82).

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

5. See, e.g., the 2005 nonstory by Elliot Spagat that begins, "Tijuana is cracking down on prostitutes by requiring them to pass monthly exams to detect sexually transmitted diseases. . . . Prostitutes at a government-run health clinic this week didn't seem too concerned about the change. They said they get checkups anyway, to ensure they are healthy." Note the contrast between the language of "cracking down" (with its suggestion of widespread illegal behavior) and the women's response that there has been no change to their legal, orderly lives.

6. A necessary caveat: transvestite sex workers are far more marginalized and exploited. Furthermore, transgender and transsexual sex workers have been almost entirely ignored in academic studies, partly because of the difficult and dangerous circumstances in which they work. At the same time, their history as victims of violence and abuse has made them distrustful of outsiders, including members of the gay human rights community. Many of them have failed to find other kinds of work. Some of them may have encountered discrimination because of their effeminate appearance, and this prejudice is enhanced by their high levels of drug and alcohol abuse and their participation in assault and robbery.

7. The women do worry about their vulnerability to disease and consistently emphasize their professionalism by commenting that they always use condoms with their (often reluctant) clients.

8. As O'Connell Davidson notes perceptively, "[S]ince women are not actually objects, but only treated as such, their potential sexual agency is extremely dangerous" (19); sex workers need to be politic because this agency can disrupt clients' feeling of social superiority.

9. What follow are passages chosen from in-depth 1995 interviews between Rangel and female sex workers in Tijuana, originally solicited as background information for the creation of a public-health questionnaire to address health-related issues of concern to the Comisión Nacional contra el SIDA. All translations are mine.

10. Our research shows that approximately eighty percent of the women in sex work are mothers.

11. As Lawrence Grossberg reminds us, "[T]he excluded, subalternized other is never outside of modernity, since it is a necessary aspect of modernity itself" (266).

Works Cited

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004. Print.

Castillo, Debra. "Asylum and Identity: The Transvestite Case." *Noésis* 15.30 (2006): 41–68. Print.

———. "Interdisciplinary Work on the Line." *Feminists at Work: Interdisciplinary Strategies by Luso-Hispanic, Latin American, and Latina Women*. Ed. Anne J. Cruz, Rosalie Hernández Pecoraro, and Joyce Tolliver. Newark: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs, 2002. 1–20. Print.

Castillo, Debra, María Gudelia Rangel Gómez, and Bonnie Delgado. "Border Lives: Prostitute Women in Tijuana." *Signs* 24.2 (1998): 387–422. Print. Trans. as "Vidas fronterizas: Mujeres prostitutas en Tijuana." *Nuevas perspectivas desde/sobre América Latina: El desafío de los estudios culturales*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Santiago: Cuarto Propio, 2000. 233–60.

Castillo, Debra, María Gudelia Rangel Gómez, and Armando Rosas Solís. "Tentative Exchanges: Tijuana Prostitutes and Their Clients." *Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Abril Trigo, Alicia Rios, and Ana Del Sarto. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. 584–605. Print.

———. "Violencia y trabajadores sexuales travestis y transgéneros en Tijuana." *Debate feminista* Dec. 2006. Print. Trans. as "Violence and Transvestite/Transgender Sex Workers in Tijuana." *Gender Violence at the U.S.-Mexico Border: Media Representation and Public Response*. Ed. Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba and Ignacio Corona. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2010. 14–34. Print.

García Canclini, Néstor. *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1989. Print.

———. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Trans. Christopher Chiappari and Silvia L. López. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. Print.

Grossberg, Lawrence. *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

Herlinghaus, Hermann. "Considerations on Violence, the Global South, and Aesthetics of Sobriety." *Meanings of Violence in Contemporary Latin America*. Ed. Gabriela Polit Dueñas and María Helena Rueda. New York: Palgrave, 2011. 75–89. Print.

Jeffreys, Elena, et al. (Scarlet Alliance). "Listen to Sex Workers." *Interface* 3.2 (2011): 271–87. Print.

Katsulis, Yasmina. "'Living like a King': Conspicuous Consumption, Virtual Communities, and the Social Construction of Paid Sex Encounters by U.S. Sex Tourists." *Men and Masculinities* 13.2 (2010): 210–30. Print.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

Monsiváis, Carlos. "De la cultura mexicana en vísperas del TLC." *La educación y la cultura ante el tratado de libre comercio*. Ed. Gilberto Guevara Niebla and Néstor García Canclini. Mexico City: Nueva Imagen, 1992. 189–209. Print.

Mouffe, Chantal. "Which Ethics for Democracy?" *The Turn to Ethics*. Ed. Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz. New York: Routledge, 2000. 85–94. Print.

Myths in the Journalistic Approach about Sexual Workers. Buenos Aires: RedTraSex, 2011. PDF file.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Nelson, Cary. "Keep Your Hands Off the 'Fierce Humanities.'" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Chronicle of Higher Educ., 28 Aug. 2011. Web. 1 Sept. 2011.

O'Connell Davidson, Julia. "The Sex Tourist, the Expatriate, His Ex-Wife, and Her 'Other': The Politics of Loss, Difference, and Desire." *Sexualities* 4.1 (2001): 5–24. Print.

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. *Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration, and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011. Kindle file.

Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York and the New York City Restaurant Industry Coalition. *Behind the Kitchen Door: Pervasive Inequality in New York City's Thriving Restaurant Industry*. 25 Jan. 2005. Web. 27 Dec. 2011.

Rodriguez, Richard. *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father*. New York: Viking, l992. Print.

Sassen, Saskia. "Global Cities and Survival Circuits." *Global Women*. Ed. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild. New York: Henry Holt, 2002. 254–74. Print.

Soderlund, Gretchen. "Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition." *NWSA Journal* 17.3 (2005): 64–87. Print.

Spagat, Elliot. "Mexican Border City of Tijuana Tries to Make Prostitution Safer." *The Salt Lake Tribune*. Salt Lake Tribune, 16 Sept. 2005. Web. 26 Dec. 2011.

Stillman, Sarah. "The Invisible Army." *The New Yorker*. Condé Nast, 6 June 2011. Web. 21 Dec. 2011.

Zhang, Sheldon. *Sex Trafficking in a Border Community: A Field Study of Sex Trafficking in Tijuana, Mexico*. *NSVRC*. National Sexual Violence Resource Center, May 2010. Web. 21 Dec. 2011.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2012.127.4.835 Published online by Cambridge University Press