Help *Not* Harm: Anti-racist and Intersectional Social Work Education on Youth in the Sex Trades

Meg Panichelli, PhD, MSW
Faculty Forum

WCU Research Highlights: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Introduction

- Assistant Professor in Undergraduate Social Work Department
- PhD in Social Work and Social Research with a focus on criminalization of people in sex trades; sexuality; anti-oppressive social work
- Coordinated harm reduction–based program for women, trans, and non-binary identified sex workers (Philadelphia)
- Program Coordinator for LGBTQI Intimate Partner Violence services (OR & WA)
Background

- Legislation intended to stop violence through threat of incarceration (Law, 2014; McCardle, 2001; Thuma, 2015; Whittier, 2016)

- Criminalization of Black cis and trans women (Davis, 2003; INCITE!, 2014; Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock, 2011; Richie, 2012; The Revolution Starts at Home, 2003)

- Blurring of choice, circumstance, and coercion (Lutnick, 2016; Sex Workers Project, n.d)

- No place of innocence (Rossiter, 2001)
Clarifying Definitions

Sex Work

Sex Trade

Sex Trafficking
Overview of the Research

- **RQ:** What are social work instructors teaching about the sex trades in social work coursework?
- **Theoretical Framework:** Anti-carceral feminism
- **Methodology:** Feminist, Qualitative, Directed Content Analysis, Thematic Analysis
Overview of Findings

☆ Depiction of People in the sex trades

☆ Instructors socialize students to respond
  ☆ 3rd parties facilitate sex trade

☆ Good intentions & Carceral Feminisms
“...having that many body parts in your body parts—having that many body fluids near you, doing things that are freaky and weird really messes up your ideas of what a relationship should look like, and intimacy” (Roe-Sepowitz, 2013).
Racialized imagery used to teach about the sex trades

Use an intersectional lens to examine concepts and values about sex(uality)

Cultivating empathy for “good victims”

Impact of Feminist Imperialism on cis women and girls in the Global South

Rescue work is paramount
16-year-old killer

Teenage prostitute

Runaway

”alleged sex trafficking victim”

“girl, 15, sent to prison for luring robbery victims with internet sex ads

Victim of human trafficking at just 15

Afraid

I want people to see me as just an average white girl

kidnapped

Just 21 years old...

Does kid things

rebellious
Rescuing Victims
Next Steps

✦ Focus on communities that are disenfranchised in sex trades and traumatized as they navigate systemic resources to access healthcare, housing, welfare, and safety.
✦ Harm Reduction Project with Providers
✦ Harm Reduction Project with Youth
Meg Panichelli, PhD, MSW
Assistant Professor
Undergraduate Social Work Department
mpanichelli@wcupa.edu