Making Criminology Public: Public Education and The Student Sex Work Project

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Introduction

In recent decades social scientists have been encouraged to use their imaginations to become active participants in the process of making positive social change (as first advocated by C. Wright Mills in 1959). For those researching sex work, this agenda has been front and centre in the call for a responsible approach to research that facilitates sex workers' resistance to oppression, and which makes for social change (Sanders 2006). Much of the work that has sought to bring about more active participation in social change within sex work studies has focused on achieving a scientific understanding of sex work through inclusive and participatory methodologies. These have addressed traditional research inequalities, such as researcher vs participant power hierarchies (Pyett 2003; Wahab 2003). As a result, the sex work research landscape has transformed into a world where sex workers' voices are increasingly situated at the centre of project design (Campbell and O'Neill 2006; Jones and Sagar 2022).

Concurrently with these moral, ethical and methodological subject-specific transformations, conversations about the wider role of criminology have emerged, addressing both its value to scientific and theoretical understandings of crime and deviance, and its role in challenging or supporting those tasked with addressing 'offending behaviour' (Loader and Sparks 2010). Many of these discussions have been conducted under the banner of Public Criminology, or Criminologies. One area of criminology that has sought to represent the often-complex realities of those with offending histories is that of inclusive methodologies, under the umbrella terms of 'Narrative and Visual Criminology' (Sandberg and Ugelvik 2016; Francis

2009). Over the past two decades, researchers have endeavoured to ensure that sex worker narratives are brought to life through the use of narrative and visual methods, in an effort to make sex workers' experiences public without the fear of further stigmatisation and judgement (Mai 2018; O'Neill 2001).

Beyond the endeavours of sex work researchers to make more inclusive both methodologies and the wider discussion on the public nature of criminology, there has been a push within the United Kingdom to ensure university research generates an impact on policy, law and practice. This requirement has been driven by the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the UK's system for assessing research quality in higher education providers. The REF is of utmost importance for universities, as outcomes are used to inform the allocation of around £2 billion per year of public funding for university research (UKRI 2022). Hence the push to develop impactful research has become a focus for higher education institutions (Watermeyer 2014). Since 2014, REF has sought to assess the impact of academic research beyond academia – on the economy, society, culture, public policy and services, health, the environment and quality of life. As this agenda progresses those tasked with assessing REF impact have called for research showcases which are 'exciting, novel, and adventurous impacts that have been founded in pioneering research' (REF 2021). They also add that, 'UK research can only benefit from having at hand impact case studies highlighting the full dynamism of the changes that research is enabling' (REF 2021). So, given the call to be 'bold' (REF 2021), this chapter reflects on the experiences of two university researchers who took up the challenge to imaginatively forward the public criminology agenda through advances in the use of narrative/visual methods and training, and by these means take

criminology to the publics[1] in an effort to reduce the stigma experienced by student sex workers.

The chapter considers the recent history of public criminology and the role of public education. It looks at how narrative and visual methods have been used in criminological research, and assesses the requirements of REF and the growing impact agenda. The chapter then explains the aims and methodology of the project, focusing on one specific element – the development and public impact of the docudrama *Fog of Sex*, and how we used the film to broaden understandings of public criminology.

Criminology and its Publics

The work of C. Wright Mills in 1959 appears to mark the starting point of discussion on the role and influence of social sciences in society. However, as other contributors to this volume so eloquently explain, criminologists and other social scientists have been debating for the last fifty years or so what Loader and Sparks (2010, p. 38) refer to as the 'shape, relevance and uses of their subject in complex times'. Without wanting to repeat discussions, it seems relevant in relation to criminology that the discourse on purpose and form has centred on how criminology interacts with various publics. For example, Loader and Sparks (2010) identify five models of criminological engagement that reach a variety of publics. The first is the scientific expert, presented as the criminologist who produces valid, reliable and useful knowledge on matters such as the causes of crime, motivations for committing crime, and the situations in which crime occurs. For this expert their public comprises those tasked with addressing crime, such as statutory agencies, practitioners and politicians. This model of

[1] We take a wide definition of the term publics, to include individuals, policymakers, statutory agencies and policymakers.

engagement dismisses the unhelpfulness of the new criminologies of the 60s and 70s, who called for criminology to step aside in helping against of social control to find solutions to the 'problem of crime'. In this way the scientific expert was seen as someone who is objective but that works with their publics to find solutions to the questions raised.

For the second model of engagement, Loader and Sparks (2010) observe that the role of policy advisor offers criminologists an opportunity (sometimes unseen) to influence and support those tasked with addressing criminological matters. The policy advisor is different to the scientific expert in that they do not have the same impetus to produce intellectual inquiry, but may be (although not exclusively) more concerned with supporting change by working with their public. In this role, criminologists are called upon to motivate their publics to engender change rather than situating themselves as opposition to the powerful.

As the observer–turned–player, Loader and Sparks (ibid, p. 32.) note the selective deafness of politicians in recent years around criminological topics, whilst also explaining how criminology has 'lost the knack of addressing public concerns and speaking effectively to governments' (ibid.). In this model of engagement, Loader and Sparks argue for criminologists to 'get their hands dirty' by working within government agencies if they want to influence policymakers towards social change.

However, in their fourth model of social movement theorist/activist, Loader and Sparks present the argument that criminologists can bring about social justice by challenging powerful publics (governments and agents of the criminal justice system), holding them to account for their actions. They highlight several examples of where critical approaches to criminology have brought about change through theorising and activism.

In the final model—the lonely prophet—criminology as a discipline is central. In this context the authors conclude that, with the exception of a few examples, criminology has not taken on ideological challenges that are sustained and large-scale but has tinkered with micro-analysis. In this view the publics are limited, as the reach is smaller and impacts are more constrained.

Situating ourselves in this final framework is useful, as it aids us in our reflections on our motivations, how we saw ourselves at the end of TSSWP, and who we considered to be our publics. As we have documented elsewhere (Jones and Sagar 2022) our experiences of engaging with social change might be characterised by our activist intentions. However, we frame our experiences as quiet activism, bringing about change for student sex workers by quietly engaging with policymakers and the National Union of Students in university settings. By inviting them to be part of our policy development working group, we were looking for buy-in from the start of the project. Our intention was to reach out to an invited and influential public by bringing them into our environment, and to get our hands dirty through service development and delivery.

This quiet activist role might be seen as a merging of the policy advisor, observer–turned–player and theorist/activist outlined above. Yet without doubt we were also very clear from the start of the project that without applying empirical rigour, the findings might be easily dismissed by many publics. Therefore, by taking up the scientific expert role we ensured, to the best of our abilities, that the findings could not be ignored or dismissed.

The Student Sex Work Project (TSSWP)

TSSWP was the first project to consider on a national scale the topic of higher education students' participation in the sex industry. The project was carried out at Swansea university between 2012 and 2015. Funded by the Big Lottery Innovation Fund, it was the first large-scale project to explore both student participation in the industry and the responses of UK higher education. The overarching framework combined rigorous social scientific research with university-led service provision for student sex workers. As part of our desire to harness the ethos of public criminology, the project also adopted a public-facing campaign aimed at reducing the stigma experienced by students working in the sex industry. The findings from the data and our reflections on our motivations have been considered elsewhere (Sagar et al. 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Gray et al. 2019; Jones and Sagar 2022). Below, we outline the methodology of the project.

TSSWP – Methodology

The project combined a multi-methodological research framework with service delivery which sought to support the wellbeing and sexual health of students working in the sex industry, should they require such assistance. The project was underpinned by a Participatory Action Research philosophy (Sagar et al. 2015a, 2015b) and delivered through a collaborative partnership. Our partners included: the Terrence Higgins Trust, a front-line service provider of UK sex work outreach programmes with a proven background in the delivery of good sexual information and a successful volunteering scheme; Cardiff and Vale University Health Board–Integrated Sexual Health Clinic, who were able to deliver sexual health services in a clinical setting; the National Union of Students Wales (NUSW), who brought to the project an expert understanding of student issues and pathways to reach the student population. It is also worth noting that from the outset the project was steered by an experienced panel of sex

work academics and project members (some of whom took on the role of peer researchers) and was subject to ongoing scrutiny and critical evaluation.

The project made many innovative claims, centred on the following four assertions. First, it would deliver the first cross-sector e-health website in Wales. Going far beyond being merely a promotional tool for the project, the website would have online services and support, including a netreach framework,[2] members' chat room, drop-ins, confidential counselling, and signposting. Second, it would fill a gap in knowledge, seeking to understand the motivations and needs of students working in the sex industry. Third, instead of engaging with service providers to gain access to sex workers, the project would have student sex worker project members, and services would be invited to assist members where necessary. Fourth, through various mechanisms such as the launch of a policy group, the project would bring stakeholders/agencies together with higher education representatives to develop appropriate responses to student sex work where appropriate to do so.

In addition to the innovations adopted by the project we also undertook more traditional research approaches. These took the form of a student survey (*The Student Sex Survey*), as well as face-to-face interviews with student sex workers, university support service staff, and student union representatives. We also conducted a case study at one university, with staff relating their experiences of students disclosing their participation in the sex industry. A final element was sending applications to all higher education institutions across Wales under the

[2] Netreach was an online Instant Messenger chat facility where members of the project could engage through text chat with project staff and volunteers. The platform acted as model of service delivery counselling, general advice and support, reporting of violence and sexual violence experienced by some project members, as well as a data collection tool.

Freedom of Information Act (2000), with the purpose of ascertaining whether any university in Wales had policies that related to student sex work (Sagar et al. 2015a, 2015b).

A key collaborator in the design and delivery of the project was Chris Morris, a documentary film maker, and at that time a professor in the University of South Wales (UK). He came on board with his student film makers to help us fulfil our aims of delivering marketing and communication strategies developed by student volunteers and student sex workers, by creating visual tools that we could use to challenge the stigma experienced by student sex workers. This creative approach resulted in the production of a testimony-led socio-documentary drama to reach out to students and the public, as well as the development of a video diary which would be used to inform evidence-led training that we designed around the testimonies of student sex workers alongside the project findings.

It seems therefore that our ambition to think big about the development of a communication and dissemination strategy that had global reach and public engagement, alongside a plan for educating the public through creative outputs and empirically based training packages, reflected the views of the LSE Public Policy Group (2011):

> The whole point of social science research is to achieve academic impact by advancing your discipline, and (where possible) by having some positive influence also on external audiences – in business, government, the media, civil society or public debate.

However, what is interesting to us when reflecting on the project ten years on, is that in the modelling by Loader and Sparks there is no consideration given to a model of public criminology that considers criminologists as public educators who can engender social change.

Development of Public Education and Public Criminology

In considering how public criminology has evolved to encompass models of public education, it is useful to borrow from Michael Burawoy and his analysis of public sociology. For Burawoy (2005), engaging publics in social discussion is a reciprocal process, with change generated through shared learning experiences. Situating public sociology in the domain of learning together is something that criminologists have tried to develop recently. For example, Uggen and Inderbitzin (2010) have suggested that public criminology calls for researchers to conduct and disseminate research that engages with the public. Indeed, as will be seen in this chapter, we endeavoured to engage our publics in a variety of ways which we argue are about education and learning. However, it seems that where public education within public criminology is concerned, much of the focus has been on either developing student learning within higher education so that students can engender critical social change through participation in policy/practice as postgraduates (see in this volume Johnson and Jones; Tidmarsh), or on the development of of 'learning together' models (see in this volume Pickering and Whitfield; Teague et al.).

Therefore, while it appears that public criminology calls for criminologists to engage with their publics in a variety of guises, less has been written about how research and public engagement strategies enhance public education, despite the push from REF to produce research that delivers impact. For us, part of our impact was delivered through the development of creative outputs that engaged with our publics, and it is this aspect that is the focus for discussion in this chapter.

Narrative and Visual Methods

Offering a rich understanding of crime and the criminal justice system, qualitative methods have become a mainstay of criminological research. These methods can include narrative

approaches such as interviewing, and ethnographic and observational accounts. As Sandberg and Ugelvik (2016) point out, storytelling is nothing new; it is a facet of our humanistic behaviours that helps us to make sense of the world we inhabit. The past fifty years have seen the emergence of narrative criminology. This form of scientific inquiry emerged formally through the work of scholars such as Sykes and Matza (1957), who used narrative methods to provide an understanding of the behaviours of 'juvenile delinquents'.

Since that time, cultural criminologists have increasingly adopted this narrative approach, and in more recent years have started to explore the role of visual methods as another way to enhance knowledge and engagement with research, in order to provide a break with the normative view of social reality; and to 'democratize' crime control (Francis 2009; Brown 2014; Carr et al. 2015; Sandberg and Ugelvik 2016). Indeed, in TSSWP the approach of publicly sharing the data through the production of a film may be an example of what Carrabine (2016) and Copes and Ragland 2016) describe as the integration of visual and narrative criminology. The purpose of this approach was to bring new ways of understanding student sex workers' experiences to wider audiences, by considering the power of the image in terms of both immediacy and accessibility (Francis 2009). However, using integrated visual and narrative methods was not new to those researching sex work.

In other publications we have discussed our experiences of using participatory action research and adopting mixed methods with sex workers in Wales (Sagar et al. 2014), and have provided a detailed reflection on our experiences of operationalising TSSWP (Jones and Sagar 2022). Our experiences and approaches have been influenced by others, such as Maggie O'Neill, who began using artistic techniques in her research and research dissemination over twenty years ago (O'Neill 2001). O'Neill has been a trail blazer in the field, sharing her experiences of how presenting data in an artistic form can 'show, tell and

enable us to experience the complexities of the lived experience and lived cultures' of sex workers (O'Neill 2001, p. 1956). We had some experience of dissemination through short films on a previous large-scale Wales-wide project (Sagar et al. 2014), and feedback was that peer researchers had found the experience liberating, and that they had gained skills and confidence. This is certainly what we wanted to achieve with TSSWP.

The Making of a Film: Stepping Out of Our Comfort Zone

At the time of the project, we would have considered ourselves to be relatively experienced and confident researchers. Interestingly, following its production the film was marketed as *Fog of Sex: Stories from the front line of student sex work*; as social scientists we felt that the dramatic title and sub text put at risk the integrity of our research by potentially detracting from the serious testimonies of student sex workers on which the film was based. However, Chris Morris explained to us that the film would retain its integrity, but its crafting had to be able to reach out to people if we stood any chance of providing information from students' own perspectives to engender discussion. He candidly pointed out to us in one of our first meetings that 'people don't watch data'.

Throughout the life of the project there were several moments similar to the example above, when our position as executive producers and our social scientific values were juxtaposed with those of an academic film maker. However, this process was as much a learning cycle for Chris as it was for us. We were very lucky that common to all of us (including his students and the student sex worker project members) was our determination to create a film which represented the voices and stories of student sex workers.

Therefore, to retain research integrity we agreed that the students who took part in the interviews would have the final editing rights. They would be the judge of whether or not the film was not only a true representation of their lives, but also whether or not the message it sent out was the right one. As highlighted by Laing and Irving (2012) and van de Meulen (2015), this is something that is often lacking in the dissemination of data in traditional sex work studies.

The testimonies were captured through semi-structured interviews which were audio recorded. Actors were employed to tell the stories verbatim. In this way the participants' anonymity was protected whilst the film provided a vehicle for their voices to be heard. We have been careful to state that only a few student stories were incorporated into the film, and thus it does not represent the voices of student sex workers generally; nor did it even represent the experiences of all students who took part in the project. In fact, the stories were selected deliberately to showcase the range of occupations and activities students were involved in, as well as a variety of experiences (some testimonies were better suited to our purposes than others). The narratives chosen for the film illustrated the wide range of sexual services provided due to the rapid growth in technologies such as the internet and mobile phones (selling direct sexual services through advertising independently on the internet, escort work, working in a brothel, web cam work, phone chat sex, naked cleaning, panty selling online, glamour modelling, pornography).

What we ended up with was a snapshot – an insight into the lives of some students engaged in sex work. Nevertheless, their stories were interesting and powerful. What we were less sure about was whether or not using film as a form of public engagement could make a

positive contribution towards reducing the stigma and discrimination student sex workers face (as the data collection had confirmed).

Fog of Sex and Public Engagement

Released in February 2015, the film went on to win a BAFTA Cymru for photography (2015), the Best Film for Young People at the Celtic Media Festival (2016), as well as the Swansea University Research as Art Prize for 'Emotion in Engagement', evaluated among others by the *New Scientist* in 2015. The film featured on Sky's Community Channel in 2016, where it was viewed more than 50,000 times. Currently it is available on YouTube (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCRucByQsJw). Shorts from the film were also screened as part of BBC3's Gender Season, with more than 1M views at the time of writing (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6W31P0e9Qo&list=PL64ScZt2I7wF6VPfD7gIGgI4X80DLPBCe).

This section of the chapter focuses specifically on public screenings of *Fog of Sex*. These screenings were held at Welsh universities and at science festivals and events in Wales and England, including the Hay Festival, the Cheltenham Science Festival, and the British Science Festival. Screenings included scheduled time for the audience to discuss the film and to raise questions regarding student sex work with Morris, Sagar and Jones. At the end of the screenings, participants were invited to fill in a questionnaire to help us capture any impact the film might have had on viewers. The survey included a mix of closed questions and Likert scales to assess levels of understanding and changes in attitudes, as well as space for qualitative comments. Here we draw on data from questionnaires from six screenings held in Wales in 2015.

All the film screenings were publicised and open. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the screenings were particularly well attended by those working in higher education and/or with students in a range of capacities. While on the one hand this could be said to be a limitation of our research, as most of our respondents already had an interest in students or encountered students in their working lives, on the other it was a strength. A key project goal was to influence our publics (in this case university staff) and to begin a process of reducing stigma against student sex workers through the development of appropriate and non-judgemental services/responses.

Expanding on Sex Work Knowledge

Reflecting upon the impacts the film had on our publics is in line with our participatory action research approach. Gathering audience feedback was therefore an important aspect of the *Fog of Sex* screenings. A total of 204 respondents completed our survey. Of these, 55% (*n* = 113) reported a change in their attitude to student sex work after watching *Fog of Sex*. Below we discuss specific impacts of the film on three different groups of respondents who had identified themselves as being in a particular position of relative knowledge about, or in regular contact with, sex workers.

Respondents Identifying As Having Previous Knowledge About Sex Work

Data analysis identified what we refer to as the *knowledgeable cohort*. This comprised 14% (*n* = 28) of the 204 respondents who assessed their knowledge about student sex work to be good or very good before watching the film. Nineteen respondents (that is, around two-thirds) from the *knowledgeable cohort* indicated that they had gained *new insights* about student sex work, with five indicating that their views had changed significantly. These respondents,

while perceiving themselves to be knowledgeable about student sex work, nevertheless felt that the film had impacted on them and expanded their understandings of it.

Despite the screenings being well attended by people working in higher education or with students, only three of those respondents declared themselves to be *knowledgeable* about sex work. Similarly, only one out of three who identified themselves as being engaged in policymaking considered themselves to be knowledgeable about sex work. The single largest group of respondents in the knowledgeable cohort were students (n = 11). The data tentatively suggests therefore that students are more aware of student sex work than higher education staff *and policymakers* – indicating perhaps a lack of awareness and a gap in knowledge amongst those respondents who are best placed to develop and deliver services. This knowledge gap was also borne out in the case study of one higher education provider, which showed up the need for training and guidance on student sex work for staff working in universities (see Sagar et al. 2015).

Respondents Identifying As Working With Sex Workers

Of the 204 respondents, 7% (n = 15) stated that they encountered *sex workers* through a work environment. Of those, 15, that is, the majority (n = 13) rated their knowledge about sex workers prior to watching the film to be good/very good, yet all but one of those 15 reported that the film had given them new insights into student sex work. These 15 respondents also reported that the film had led to a change in attitude. Changes in attitude varied from slight (n = 5) to significant (n = 4) and this is perhaps surprising given that they encountered sex workers through their occupations. In spite of the varying degrees of changes in attitude, it does seem that the film impacted on a range of stakeholders/professionals who were already knowledgeable about sex work.

(INSERT FIGURE 1)

(INSERT FIGURE 2)

Figures 1 and 2 show that in this particular subsection, whilst the general trend was that the more knowledgeable an individual felt themselves to be, the less we saw a self-reported attitude change, there was some attitude change. The data also shows that the film delivered new insights relatively consistently at each level of knowledge, including to those who considered themselves to be among the most knowledgeable of individuals working alongside student sex workers. This leads to a tentative conclusion that the voices of student sex workers embedded in the film promoted attitudinal change amongst professionals – an objective for the project and the students who took part in the film.

Respondents Who Have Contact With Higher Education Students Through Their Work

Notably, 72% (n = 146) of respondents encountered higher education students through their work, yet only 26% (n = 18) of these respondents rated their knowledge about student sex work prior to seeing the film to be good or very good. Interestingly, 18 respondents also indicated that they knew sex workers in their personal environments, with only five reporting that they encountered sex workers in their work environment. Of the 146 respondents, 67 were not sure if they had any connections to sex workers.

The vast majority of the 146 respondents in this subsection (n = 123) indicated that they had acquired new insights after seeing the film, with only one responding that the film had not changed their views. A total of 83 reported that their views had changed strongly, or very strongly. This level of new insight suggests that the film was a very valuable tool, and that

listening to the stories of students engaged in sex work was a mechanism to enhance understanding.

Film Takeaways

The film set out to challenge people's underlying assumptions about sex work, for example that sex workers are unskilled, poorly educated, immoral, drug/alcohol misusers (Weitzer 2010). Quite simply, this spoiled identity (Goffman 1968) can lead to stereotyping, resulting in oppression, discrimination and damaging judgements, where sex workers become underserving and throwaway people (see for example, Lowman 1992; O'Neill 2001). Our film deconstructed many of the negative assumptions that pervade society, through stories from people who are highly educated, who are primarily fighting back against student debt, who might need support, but who also might enjoy their work and want to earn money to be part of the consumer society. This was not lost on our respondents. Film takeaway comments included, 'The difference between students working in the sex industry for need i.e. to get money for fees/accommodation Vs those working in it to enable them to be consumers', and an acknowledgement that, 'Any sex worker is a real person with real problems'. Other respondents free text comments reported on how valuable the film was in enhancing understanding of the impact of stigma on student sex workers, including 'how [student sex workers] deal with self-esteem, confidence and relationships', while another noted:

> [how the film] changed the perception of the stereotypes. You've showed them as real people – compared to other films that makes them seem to be really low, low-class people where they truly are not; Very educational.

This observation was repeated elsewhere, '[how the film] is completely different to the stereotypes', while another respondent understood that the film had the capacity to spark the interest of those who could make positive changes in society for sex workers, whether sex workers wished to stay in the industry or to leave it:

> I am really hopeful that the project and the film will be able to help someone get out of this industry (if they wish to) and that government and university bodies do their utmost to support these students.

Figure 3 provides a thematic overview of what our respondents learned from the film on reflection.

(INSERT FIGURE 3)

Concluding Remarks

The screening results indicated that the film facilitated a better understanding of student sex work. In revealing this we knew that the film had the potential to be an important means towards meeting one of the project's core objectives – to begin a process of de-stigmatisation resulting in the provision of more appropriate assistance and support for students engaged in the sex industry. Indeed, we already knew that there was a very real need for public education among higher education staff. To reiterate, the project had also carried out a case study at one Welsh university which showed a need for improved levels of understanding on a range of sex worker issues, and for guidance and training; these findings were published in 2015 (Sagar et al.).

However, we were very aware that not all professionals who work within a higher education setting access academic journals, and those that do are likely to access journals connected to their own research fields. We understood that we had to think beyond academic publications if we wanted to reach 'our publics' working in higher education, including student support and wellbeing staff, lecturers, financial support providers, housing advice/support and so on. Likewise, we were keen to reach the wider range of service providers for students that exists outside of higher education (for example, GP practices and sexual health clinics). Therefore, it made perfect sense to embed excerpts and shorts from the film into our training packages. Chris Morris was right, people 'don't watch data', but they can immerse themselves in the

stories of student sex workers on film. This was supported by respondent comments which attested to the power of the film to 'leave a mark well after the credits', and that 'the film is brilliant for educating society…powerful footage…excellent project'.

It is therefore unsurprising that the screening findings led to the incorporation of film into TSSWP's sex worker training packages. This included the 2019 launch of the first student sex worker online training tool to promote professional understanding about student sex work among higher education staff and other service providers/practitioners who have contact with students. Like the film, the training was co-produced with student sex worker project members and project partners to raise awareness about stigma and its negative impact on students engaged in the sex industry. Importantly, the training focuses on issues that student sex workers want service providers and those who work in higher education to have a better understanding of. To date the project has trained over 1,000 professionals/stakeholders in Wales and beyond to promote a better understanding of student sex work.

Throughout the creative dissemination process, the empowerment of student sex workers was central. Therefore, as we bring the chapter to a close, we turn our attention to those student sex workers who participated in the project. Not only did student sex workers report feelings of empowerment; for some the experience was transformative. For example, one student whose story was included in the training stated:

> my story has been heard by so many people and that is an incredible feeling…my story is included in the training and that means that staff in HE hear my voice and this should really help services at Uni be more understanding and not judge. (Sanders and Campbell 2015)

Another project member whose story was included in the project film and incorporated into training packages perceived the experience to be life-changing:

> Taking part in the film has been a really important and life-changing part of my life. I still think about it a lot. It empowered me to start making some changes. I felt like my story wasn't dramatized or made more interesting or more to fit in with what the project wanted to portray. That made me feel my story was important as it was. […] The film gave me a voice when I never had one before. This has been massively empowering for me. It keeps me going when I feel totally alone even four years later.

Finally, we would state that while the film enabled student sex worker voices to enter the public arena to directly challenge the myths about sex work and who is a sex worker, and to raise awareness about the stigma that keeps them socially excluded and vulnerable, the battle is far from won. In this respect, the fact that the film has longevity is extremely significant. The YouTube presence of the film and associated shorts ensures that the student sex worker voices captured in 2015 have endurance. Their stories are still important – the issues they raise have not diminished over the years since the project, but through film their stories continue to contribute to a wider public and professional understanding. To conclude, we would argue that in taking such a bold approach to the design of a research project alongside a creative focus on dissemination, we expanded the thinking around public criminology to encompass public education as a way to make change and, in this case, to reduce the stigma experienced by student sex workers. Would we do it again? Yes.

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