SELLING SEX IN LUGANVILLE

Ni-Vanuatu sex workers' experiences of, and limits to claiming their sexual and reproductive health rights in Luganville, Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu

By

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A thesis submitted to Victoria University of Wellington in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Development Studies

School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences

Victoria University of Wellington

(2017)

Abstract

This thesis is a foundational piece of research into ni-Vanuatu sex workers' experiences within the sex industry of Luganville, on the northern island of Espiritu Santo in Vanuatu. This research identifies and unpacks ni-Vanuatu sex workers' limits to claiming their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), limits which are intricately associated with gender paradigms and hierarchies in Vanuatu.

Those interviewed were male and female sex workers, an ex-sex worker, 'middle men,' who manage sexual transactions, a client and an ex-boyfriend of a local sex worker. Discussions focused on the technicalities of Luganville's sex industry, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the extent to which sex workers are able to exercise agency during interactions with clients. Thus, this thesis reveals both the intricate workings of the sex industry in Luganville, and the considerable extent to which sex workers are limited in making decisions about their wellbeing, leading to significant accounts of abuse.

The theory of 'body work' informs this thesis' analysis of how ni-Vanuatu sex workers' bodies are understood as a constitution of their self. This analysis reveals the extent to which sex workers are divested of personhood, thereby limiting their ability to have their rights as persons realised. This thesis also draws on the complex process of, as the author conceptualises, gender and develop*man* in Vanuatu; that is, the ways in which Vanuatu has mingled with, co-opted, and rejected introduced commodities, ways, and beliefs in particularly gendered ways. In this way, this thesis is not only unique in investigating the sex industry in Luganville. This thesis also provides a deep analysis of sex work as a part of gender and develop*man* in Vanuatu, and what that process reveals about sex workers' agency in particular, and modern configurations of gender in Vanuatu in general.

Keywords: Sex work, sexual/reproductive health rights, Vanuatu, gender, agency

Acknowledgements/Tank yu tumas iko long olgeta ia

Fesfala samting mimi nid blong mi raetem hemi tank yu tumas iko long olgeta we oli bin serem olgeta storian blo olgeta wetem mi. Yufala istap long hat blong mi wantaem. Bigfala ripot ia hemi blong yufala.

Mi wantem tu blong talem tank yu tumas iko long ol okanaesasin we oli bin giv han long riserj ia: Wan Smolbag, Northern Care Youth Centre/Clinic, mo Yut Council blong Luganville. Yufala nao yufala i stap long fored blong sapotem olgeta yangfala, man mo woman blong Vanuatu. Hemia hemi wan ripot blong yufala i save lukluk lo hem, mo wok blong sapotem olgeta seks woka long kommuniti long Luganville, mo long ol narafala pat blong Vanuatu. Bakegen, tank yu tumas long sapot we yufala i bin kivim long mi long taem blong riserj ia.

Thank you to my supervisor, Polly, for all of your support and advice during this journey. Your thorough engagement with my research and writing, and your sound and constructive feedback and advice has truly been invaluable. Thank you very much!

Dad, it saddens me endlessly that you will never get to read this work, though I am grateful that you were able to follow me through much of this journey, and I know that this work would have made you proud. I share the lifelong passion you had for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and your reassuring words when I have felt overwhelmed in walking the tight rope of SRHR research, work, and advocacy, will remain important to me. Love and socks forever.

Mum, you are my rock, my sanctuary, my safe haven, and my inspiration in life. While I fly often with wonky wings, you remain both my launching pad, and my safety net. This strength; this tenacity; this steadfast, and unconditional love is the most precious gift of all. Love you always.

Flowers

So,
I heard there
are
these flowers.

They
open with the
sun
then clasp their

scent
with the night
while
the bees sleep.

But
I don't listen
to
such revolutions

of
the earth. I
open
by my own

command;
my smell pe-
ne-
tates the night.

- Kate Burry, 2016

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores the possibilities for sex workers to claim their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) in Luganville, a rapidly urbanising township on the northern island of Espiritu Santo (henceforth referred to as Santo), in Vanuatu. While exchanging sex for money and/or other goods may offer some financial freedom for women and men who are involved in Luganville's sex industry, their ability to exercise their rights to safe working conditions is questionable. SRHR is the rights framework for this research, and, as the sub-title of this thesis (and my poem, 'Flowers', which was inspired by my research) implies, I am concerned with peoples' agency vis-à-vis their rights, that is the extent to which they can *claim* them. However, agency cannot be considered separately from who people are, which is informed significantly by where they are from, and how they identify with their social, cultural, economic, and gendered contexts.

Below I will introduce the core issues this thesis will discuss in relation to sex work, before introducing the key theories which underpin my analysis. I will then discuss my decision to undertake research in sex work, as well as the scope of this research.

1.1 Gender, power, and rights

Gender, power, and rights are complex and interconnected concepts, all three of which are intertwined with each other, as they are with the multiplicity of social, cultural, economic, and gendered contexts in which they emerge. The mere phrase, which is central to this research, of people 'claiming their rights' is far from a straightforward, singular, linear narrative of people seizing their human rights. Rather it raises questions of not only practical nature, but also epistemological, that is, how people conceive of 'rights', and even ontological nature, as who they are is a key determinant of both their understanding of, and ability to claim their rights. So, while the issue of human rights is central to this research, it is not separable from the contexts in which they are being contemplated. Gender, and how gendered constructs relate to power and authority, are key issues which underpin the ability to claim rights within particular settings, but also in terms of how rights are fundamentally

understood. An in-depth discussion of gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu is addressed in Section 2.6 of this thesis.

Sex work is a particular type of labour which often sits on, or outside the peripheries of moral, legal, and gender norms, at once deeply rooted in, and in opposition to those social structures which exist around them. Thus, the topic of sex work must be considered vis-à-vis the social structures which exist within a given context which ultimately influences sex workers' lives and wellbeing¹. Underlying gender paradigms in particular, which influence allocations of power and authority, are key to the issue of the extent to which sex workers have control over their lives, and individual encounters with clients.

1.2 Sex work and international development

This thesis is a feminist project² which sees sex work as a form labour, but one which also tends to sit at a point of contention in relation to gender paradigms. Sex work is intricately linked to the emergence, growth, and reliance on a cash economy (O'Reilly, O'Reilly, & Habegger, 2005; Abel, Fitzgerald, Healy, & Taylor, 2010; Mitchell, 2011; Callick, 2011; Inifiri, 2011; United States Department of State, 2014; Cassey, 2015; Radio New Zealand, 2015). Financial vulnerability brought about by employment deficits in the context of urbanisation may necessitate involvement in sex work as a means for earning an income. Yet, as noted, sex work is also often situated on the legal, moral, and gendered margins of societies, making sex workers a particularly vulnerable group in the context of modernisation³.

¹ In this thesis, wellbeing is understood, and measured by the extent to which people can realise their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). Accordingly, the following World Health Organisation (2017) description provides an accurate summary of wellbeing as "a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence." In addition, SRHR also encompasses reproductive health, including access to education, modern contraceptives, abortion, and the right to a safe and healthy pregnancy.

² See Sections 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4; all key theoretical frameworks in this thesis can be described as feminist as they place gender constructs, and how the lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing of people are impacted based on their gender, at the heart of the analysis (Mikkola, 2016).

³ Modernisation refers to macroeconomic development efforts, namely the push towards an expansion in trade, industry and private sector business with the purpose of instigating incremental growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). These development efforts often have ramifications, such as

The theories of gender and development (GAD), transnational feminism, and body work provide the theoretical framework for analysing sex work as a form of labour within the setting of modernisation, and from the context of gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu.

1.3 Taking on the taboo

It would be fair to say my choice of research topic has caused several eyebrows to raise. Perhaps it takes a particular type of person to undertake this type of research, or perhaps it is a sign of the general interest in the traditionally hush-hush, underground world of prostitution. I have also, several times, had people query with obvious surprise if it 'happens a lot' in Vanuatu; a question which, up until I actually did my research, I had no answer to, other than reports which had been released on sex work in Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila (McMillan & Worth, 2011a; UNICEF, 2010; Bulu, Gold, & Sladden, 2007). So, I decided to do research on the deeply taboo topic of sex work, in, I might add, a largely conservative context, with little clue as to how I might even begin to uncover a sex work industry of which I only had anecdotal evidence.

Why?

Fundamentally, I am concerned with marginalised populations, the people who are also particularly vulnerable during periods of considerable change, such as the significant modernisation efforts occurring in Luganville around the time of this research. I had previously lived in Luganville, working with the peer education team at the Northern Care Youth Clinic, which involved facilitating workshops and outreach programmes on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Thus, I had experience in, and had developed a passion for the specific area of SRHR, as well as fluency in Bislama, the national language of Vanuatu. Furthermore, I became concerned about the rumoured instances of sex work, which were apparently on the rise⁴, and the wellbeing of the people involved, especially given there were no outreach efforts to this community at the time.

urbanisation, where people increasingly move to urban areas in search of wage/salary-based employment, however underemployment is also a common issue during rapid urbanisation.

⁴ One story I heard from a colleague was about two female sex workers from her suburb in Luganville whose regular cliental were Chinese men who were construction workers on the wharf. According to my

The more I read about sex work, and the surrounding literature on gender, development, transnational feminism, and body work (discussed below), the more it was revealed as not merely a taboo topic which raises eyebrows. It is a hugely significant area of research which exposes the crux of tensions regarding gender norms, power and agency, as well as the rights of marginalised people in a rapidly developing setting. Furthermore, I came to realise that Luganville was not only a familiar setting for my research, but an important case study for the study of sex work, and its relationship to development.

What I set out to understand was twofold. I was, as mentioned, concerned about sex workers' levels of wellbeing, so aimed to understand their experiences working in the sex industry in Luganville, and the extent to which they could negotiate the conditions of their interactions with clients, and why. However, I also set out to understand the technicalities of Luganville's sex industry, given that I was the first researcher to undertake research on this area of life in the town. In understanding the inner workings of Luganville's sex industry, I also sought to understand how so many young people, and particularly young women, came to be in such vulnerable positions in the first place. So, while the core question of this thesis revolves around sex workers' sexual and reproductive health and rights, the nature of the sex industry in Luganville was also a key area of enquiry.

Below I commence a discussion of the relevant literature for this thesis on ni-Vanuatu sex workers' experiences of, and limits to claiming their sexual and reproductive health rights in Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu. The literature contextualises this research within academic debates on gender, rights, and labour. From here, the research methodologies and method are considered and justified, and the findings are discussed. Finally, I analyse the findings, relating back to the literature, and exploring deeply the limits sex workers have in claiming their SRHR, limits which are inextricably linked to the dynamics of gender, power, and rights in urban Vanuatu, and which are influenced by perceptions of sex workers personhood and agency.

colleague, these sex workers had been ridiculed by their community, including having their hair cut off, and were then kicked out.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Literature reviews are important as they contextualise research within existing academic literature, and relevant theories, as well as identify gaps in knowledge about the topic (Callahan, 2014). The literature which will be discussed below will contextualise this research as a feminist project focussed on the importance of sexual and reproductive health rights for marginalised populations in developing countries.

Gender and Development forms the foundational framework for this research, and will be discussed first, before looking at transnational feminism, which contextualises a human rights approach to research with sex workers. 'Body work' provides a more specific focus on sex work as a form of labour, and provides an analytical framework for understanding the ways in which the body is conceived as a constitution of the self. In establishing the significance of engaging with sex workers' agency and subjectivities, and the extent to which they may exercise control over their working lives, sexual and reproductive health rights are considered as a specific set of rights relevant to sex workers' sexual transactions.

I then discuss literature on the core issues of gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu, as this contextual analysis will critically inform this thesis. I then consider the literature that presently exists on sex work in Vanuatu against the backdrop of gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu. Finally, I give a summary of the setting of this research, and link this discussion to my research focus.

2.2 Gender and development

This section will discuss Gender and Development, a fundamental theoretical, and policy framework in international development which prioritises the analysis of underlying gender constructs, and subsequent power imbalances within specific contexts (Rathgeber, 1995). First, the origins of gender and development will be considered, before discussing the significance of gender and development in the field

of international development, and lastly how gender and development relates to the division of labour.

Gender and Development, or GAD, generally comes from the acknowledgement that the lives of women and men are affected differently by development processes (Momsen, 2004). GAD emerged out of critiques of an earlier theoretical model, Women in Development, or WID. WID called for a recognition of women's disadvantages in patriarchal society and demanded women's participation in "male-defined and male-dominated social and economic structures" (Rathgeber, 1995, p. 206). WID's imperialist lens conceptualised women's development needs as being fulfilled via the trickling down of the benefits of the modern world, and liberal economics (Chowdhry, 1995). GAD arose to challenge WID's narrow analysis of women's lives globally, as well as its imperialistic tendencies, instead focussing on the power structures at play within societies based on inequitable roles assigned to men and women.

GAD provides a framework which looks at gender as a malleable social construct, which varies based on the cultural, economic, social, and historical context of a given place and time (CEDPA, 1996). GAD conceives of gender paradigms as differing from culture to culture, and society to society, and relating intricately to power structures between different social groups within cultures and societies (CEDPA, 1996). GAD conceptualises power as relational, with gender as a key determinant of how much influence someone has over their life and livelihood. GAD looks at how gender roles are constructed and learnt by the sexes in different contexts, how those structures relate to power inequities, and how people perceive of their lives and barriers to their wellbeing due to the gendered power structures at play (Hirshman, 1995).

Although GAD is concerned with power inequities informed by gender constructs, GAD does generally acknowledge that there are certain elements of female biological sex, especially her reproductive 'function', which often influence her (feminine) gender, and produce more repressive conditions in relation to the masculine gender (CEDPA, 1996). Reproductive labour, especially when considered in the context of modernisation and urbanisation, also becomes "increasingly isolated and spatially separated from paid productive labour outside the home" (Momsen, 1991, p. 29).

Thus, the financial pressures arising from economic growth, and the desire to participate in the cash-based economy may bring about, or exacerbate, inequitable gender dynamics in terms of income generation and distribution.

Understanding gender and development entails the analysis of both productive and reproductive labour, and the interplay between them mediated by underpinning gendered power relations (Momsen, 2004). Gender biases and women's unpaid reproductive, domestic and child rearing role tend to play a significant role in labour segregation (Momsen, 2004). In situations of high unemployment, men may be prioritised as stereotypically the household providers, yet female-headed households are also numerous in urban areas, where single women may have to support multiple dependents (Momsen, 2004). Situations where women have limited access to family planning services merely increases the burden of responsibility regarding the numbers of dependants, heightening the need for more disposable income, which may be difficult to come by.

GAD acknowledges how development is affected by gender relations which usually subordinate women to varying extents, based on varying norms around the ways gender is constructed. GAD also observes gender as relational, involving the ways in which men relate to men, women to women, and men and women to each other. Thus, men, and masculinities (or how men enact 'man-ness') also play an important part in any gender analysis, especially in understanding gender inequality and power within certain settings. Broadly speaking, the inclusion of men in gender dialogues is seen as central to achieving gender equity, as gender equity entails structural changes which include men, and especially as these changes may denote male resistance (Wanner & Wadham, 2015; Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, 2005; White, 1997).

Gender analysis which is inclusive of femininities *and* masculinities is conducive to a more holistic perception of the way gender intersects with development, and other forms of power, such as class and race. As with understanding femininities, an analysis of masculinities needs to be grounded in local, and historical accounts of gender orders, including the ways in which Christian missions and colonialism has influenced

the lives and identities of men⁵. In acknowledging and incorporating masculinities in gender analyses, rather than depicting men (especially men of colour) as inevitable forces of violence and oppression, they become more visible agents, who may also observe and resist forms of oppression, such as racial inequities brought about by colonisation (Morrell & Swart, 2005). Furthermore, “attacking patriarchy head on (and casting men as the enemy)” (Morrell & Swart, 2005, p. 100) has been observed to be counter-productive to development efforts, by creating a more divisive gender landscape. Thus, men and women, femininities and masculinities, and the ways in which they merge and diverge, and produce and reproduce systems of power within different contexts, ought to be understood.

GAD is also a useful framework for contemplating the issue of sexuality. Sexuality is central to gender constructs (Morrell & Swart, 2005). As Susie Jolly (2000) argues: “Gender norms concerned with sexuality shape both women’s and men’s lives, including rules determining how, and with whom, women and men should engage sexually.” (p. 79). Thus, an analysis of gender relations and constructs concerns not only reproductive and productive labour, but also sexual behaviour, where various norms govern one’s sexual status, and therefore power, within a given context. Sexual norms of behaviour for men and women also affect the politics of sex work, including men who have sex with men.

In relation to the above, GAD analysis entails that both the *condition* and the *position* of women and men are understood within a given setting; that is “their material state in terms of education, access to credit, technology, health status, legal status, etc.”, and the gendered power dynamics, informed by various social and cultural discourses, which underpin those conditions (Rathgeber, 1995, p. 206). The GAD framework is useful, therefore, for understanding sex work, where someone’s (i.e. often a woman’s or a homosexual male’s) material *condition* may lead them into the sex industry, and their *position*, socially, legally, culturally, and in relation to their clients influences the extent to which they may claim, and have their rights recognised. Similarly, the social,

⁵ European colonisation, for instance, brought about land alienation for many indigenous populations, and saw generations of young men leaving their communities for work on plantations (Jolly, 1994; Connell, 2005).

cultural, or legal *position* of sex workers may affect their *condition*, for instance in gaining alternative employment, or accessing health care or medication.

Transnational feminism shares many of the same objectives as GAD in that it argues for analysis based on an understanding of context, while providing a feminist framework for the study of sex work in the 21st century. Transnational feminism offers a framework from which we may consider global human rights dialogues, and, importantly, peoples various articulations and understandings of those rights. I will focus specifically on the process of urbanisation as it relates to transnational feminism which is particularly relevant for the context of this research.

2.3 Transnational feminism

Just as GAD may be seen as a critique of the homogenising tendencies of the WID movement, transnational feminism questions the generalising ‘sex workers as victims’ rhetoric. Rather, transnational feminism stipulates that sex workers’ lives and wellbeing are determined by a multiplicity of factors related to their various contexts (Kempadoo, 2001). Transnational feminism, therefore, follows GAD’s logic in terms of critiquing essentialist framing and paying attention to the complexities of individual lives and contexts. Transnational feminism also provides a body of feminist literature relevant to the topic of sex work in the context of globalisation and urbanisation.

The field of transnationalism explores “the flow of people, ideas, capital, culture, and goods” (Pence & Zimmerman, 2012, p. 495) across borders, though analysis focuses on a “microanalytical perspective” as opposed to the “macroanalytical” standpoint of globalisation research (Köngeter, 2010). Transnational feminism is both macro- and microanalytical. It describes a paradigm which moves beyond particular (e.g. ethnocentric, or patriarchal) territories, observing simultaneously broader inequalities which exist within and across borders, and the multiplicity of legitimate human experiences and agency (Fernandes, 2013).

Transnational feminism also stems from the recognition that migration, whether from rural to urban areas in one country, or across national borders, has become an increasingly significant aspect of women’s lives as they search for better life and work

opportunities (Jagori, 2012). However, migration also often makes people, particularly women, vulnerable to exploitation, both throughout the process of migration and in their sites of work (Jagori, 2012). Transnational feminism, therefore, provides a framework for analysing the geopolitical realities of the 21st century, where borders are blurred via networks of technology, mass media, the internet, free trade and industry, travel, migration, and even international development efforts. Yet, it recognises the heterogeneity of people's experiences, while paying attention to the *conditions* which bring about situations of exploitation, as well as broader inequalities which underpin those conditions.

The large scale, and multinational production and distribution of goods, money, services, and culture has changed the feminist landscape, and, as Reilly (2011) suggests, the 'political project' of feminisms. Transnational feminism acknowledges the global effort to challenge patriarchal, neo-liberal, and racist oppression, and to promote human rights via cross-border, cross-cultural dialogues and advocacy. Transnational feminism also recognises the necessity of challenging Western hegemony within the human rights structure "in ways that extend the application of human rights to previously excluded and/or marginalised individuals, groups, issues and contexts." (Reilly, 2011, p. 62). In other words, transnational feminism reveals that the binary 'global'/'local' distinction may not be as clean cut in the context of globalisation, instead proposing spaces of negotiation, and exchange between different 'localised' groups, in order to establish more multifaceted understandings of human, and women's rights (Reilly, 2011).

Transnational feminism provides a useful framework for understanding the sex work industry. On the one hand, sex work may be conceived as an aspect of the expansion of the cash economy, and vulnerabilities brought about by urbanisation, such as underemployment (Momsen, 2004). Sex work is often perceived as the "as the best out of a series of other limited life options" (Dewey & Zheng, 2013, p. 13), as sex work is often more profitable compared to other lower-skilled, informal sector work (Momsen, 2004). However, it is a particularly gendered ramification of urbanisation, with women making up the majority of the labour force in the global sex industry (Momsen, 2004). Transnational feminism keeps the tension between what is shared,

for example experiences based on gender, and what is specific, that is, peoples' subjective encounters and understandings. This 'tension' entails understanding underlying social and cultural conditions for people who work in the sex industry, as well as engaging with peoples' individual experiences.

What GAD and transnational feminism have in common is the emphasis on moving from the general to the particular. When analysing sex work, this means engaging with the diversity and complexity of sex workers' everyday lives while recognising the importance of more universal rights. Transnational feminism, therefore, offers an alternative to the voluntary/forced dichotomy, which often conceives of sex workers as victims of male sexual oppression either way⁶. What the voluntary/forced dichotomy reproduces, however, is "the terms on which women can claim and enjoy human rights" (Kapur, 2005, pp. 134-135), namely through being identified as a victim and only a victim. However, this victimising rhetoric "risks denying women the agency that they in fact demonstrate throughout their lives" (ibid.). Thus, such reductive theories are not conducive to an effective human rights analysis, which requires a consideration of the extent to which people can exercise agency vis-à-vis their rights, including during their working lives. A transnational feminist discussion of sex work emphasises the agency and subjectivity of sex workers, and the grounds on which they may negotiate their encounters with clients, and from which they understand and claim their rights (Kempadoo, 2001).

The grounds on which sex workers may claim their rights, and negotiate a transaction on their terms, are partly defined by particular histories, including colonisation and cultural traditions, which inform sex workers' *positions* within their society. These positions may cause sex workers to be vulnerable to sexual and physical violence, as well as harassment and coercion due to their position often on the cultural, sexual, gendered, moral, and legal peripheries (Dewey, 2011; Kempadoo, 2001). 'Body work'

⁶ The forced/voluntary dichotomy, and the notion of female sex workers as victims, is an argument which forms the basis of abolitionism (e.g. see Hughes, 2000; Hughes, 2003; Farley, 2004; Barry, 1979). Abolitionism, often associated with the Scandinavian laws on prostitution, insists on the criminalisation of procurement and brothel-keeping, as well as overt soliciting by sex workers. However, this situation often does not lead to safer working conditions for sex workers, even fostering stigma and discrimination against sex workers by pushing for the shutting down of the sex industry (Amnesty International, 2016; Brewis & Linstead, 2000).

provides a theoretical framework from which sex work may be considered as a form of labour, thereby focus may be directed towards their wellbeing as workers. What 'body work' also provides is a framework from which we may consider the body as a constitution of the self, which, in relation to sex workers, reveals the extent to which they can exercise agency during transactions.

2.4 'Bodywork': conceptualising sex work as a form of labour

'Body work' is a theory which, like GAD and transnational feminism, makes links to the underlying gendered structures which inform labour divisions in the era of globalisation. Wolkowitz (2002) defines body work as "work that takes the body as its immediate site of labour, involving intimate, messy contact with the (frequently supine or naked) body, its orifices or products through touch or close proximity." (p. 497). Sex work clearly fits this description, but importantly body work also tends to be a particularly feminised form of labour. 'Body work' is a significant theory for this research in order to conceptualise sex work as a form of labour, thereby enabling sex workers' rights to become comprehensible.

'Body work' is associated with the feminisation of poverty in that it mostly describes the type of work women of a particular level of economic and social vulnerability take on. The structural position of women in certain settings may further enhance their vulnerabilities within labour environments (Jagori, 2012). 'Body work' denotes labour which intimately engages with the body and its various excretions, which has strong ties to the reproductive labour of women, as well as other domestic duties such as child rearing, and caring for the elderly. 'Body work' also has class and racial implications, as more privileged women (namely, often white, educated women from industrialised countries) are increasingly becoming employed in other paid employment. Thus, often migrant women from poorer countries enter to fill the gaps left by more affluent women who are no longer available for the unpaid domestic work which previously would have been expected of them (Wolkowitz, 2002)⁷. It is, therefore, important to consider this particularly feminised form of labour in the

⁷ Poorer women employed in the body work of other more privileged women is not, of course, a new phenomenon (consider, for example, wet nursing).

context of globalisation and labour migration, and the fact that “mundane paid body work services has become a vital replacement for the production of objects as a source of profit and employment” (Wolkowitz, 2002, p. 299).

Furthermore, Wolkowitz (2002) notes that “[i]n body work the more general segmentation of the labour market by sex, class and ‘race’ is deeply intertwined with attitudes towards (parts of) the body”. Accordingly, lower status workers are left “to deal with what is rejected, left over, spills out and pollutes” (p. 501). Sex work is implicated in lower status body work. Sex workers’ lower status relates to the fact that they deal with the contentious realm of sexual relations, the various secretions that act entails, and parts of the body (namely genitalia) that provoke feelings of awkwardness, to say the least. At the same time, the body (especially the sexual and reproductive parts in the case of sex work) can be conceptualised as a “safety net” for women of lower ‘status’ or education levels for the production of revenue (Dewey, 2011, p. 164). However, the subsequent vulnerability that can be experienced, due to the perceived lack of alternatives and, therefore, a restricted ability to negotiate the terms of the labour being sold, exposes the power imbalance which may emerge during a transaction.

‘Body work’ combines productive and reproductive labour, where reproductive body parts may be used as a financial safeguard. However, ‘body work’ also exposes gendered and racial inequalities within the context of urbanisation, industrial development, and labour migration. ‘Body work’ also reveals deeply gendered stereotypes around the body, and at the crux of this issue is the body’s “special relation to the constitution of the self” (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 121). Where sex work is concerned, this ‘special relation’ forms the ontological basis for subsequent perceptions of sex workers, and influences the extent to which they can exercise agency during transactions. There are different concepts around the ways in which the body constitutes the self, which will each be discussed in relation to sex workers: the body as text, as an ‘essentialised’ body, as a ‘commodified’ body, as a ‘socialised’ body, as a ‘body without organs’, and as an ‘agential’ body (Wolkowitz, 2006).

The body as text

The body as text refers to the construction of the self as mediated by various discourses relating to the body, parts of the body, or particular bodies. Discourses around sex workers' bodies are complex as they are tied up with dialogues around sex, sexuality, gender, disease, propriety, and other abuses or states of injury. Where monogamy, 'love,' and marriage are concerned, for example, prostitution has been considered an 'abuse of sex', and the body of the sex worker as a site of sin (Nagle, 1997). Thus, the body as text is also contextual, as it relates to the specific discourses about bodies within a particular place.

The body as text also intersects with transnational discourses, which can have racialised connotations. Transnational feminism has criticised the generalising discourses around the injured bodies of women of colour, and as symbols for the general suffering of 'Women' as further marginalising and disempowering women of colour by making them synonymous with the idea of 'the victim' (Doezema, 2001). The body as text, then, conceives of women's bodies, and sex workers' bodies in particular, as being understood via certain discourses which relate to specific contexts.

The 'essentialised' body

Relating to the body-as-text as a constitution of the self, women's bodies are often 'essentialised' as being pure and innocent, mirroring traditional moralist, patriarchal views (Wolkowitz, 2006). Subsequently, the essential self of the female sex worker is, by contrast, debased, and often to the extent that "it cannot recognise its true interests", so is "de-selfed" (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 126). Framed as an 'essentialised' body, then, the sex worker is completely subsumed and defined by her being contrary to what women are, or ought to be (Wolkowitz, 2006). To the extent that sex workers are ontologically conceived as anti-woman, they are denied legitimate recognition as people, which also undermines attempts to claim their rights on an equal footing with others.

Where sex workers' bodies, and women's bodies more generally, especially in relation to their sexual and reproductive parts, are "seen to be constructed discursively, the client's body and sexual desires are deemed natural" (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 124). The naturalness of male desire is apparent in Foucault's book, *The Use of Pleasure* (1984),

which chronicles the discursive construction of 'sexuality' throughout European history. Foucault formulates the socially constructed desiring subject as male, using terms such as "desiring man" interchangeably with the "desiring subject" and, more simply, "the self" (e.g. on page 13). So, whereas men are able to exercise agency in relation to that aspect of themselves attached to their sexual bodies, women's sexual agency is encompassed by essentialist discourses about their bodies⁸.

The 'commodified' body

According to the body-as-text and the 'essentialised' body, the sex worker is ultimately 'de-selved' in mainstream, patriarchal, and Eurocentric interpretations of women's bodies. The 'commodified' self adds to the complexity of the body/self of sex workers as it denotes the "vexed relation between money and sex" (McClintock, 1993, p. 1). As sex workers exchange sexual services for money (and/or other goods), to some the bodies of sex workers are comprehended as a "form of property, a legitimate object of trade" (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 128). In this view, sex workers literally conceived as 'selling themselves', which essentially puts the power in the hands of the 'consumer', or client. On the other hand, sex worker rights activists and feminists conceive of sex workers as performing a labour which is separate from the self (Wolkowitz, 2006). As McClintock (1993) puts it, "it is not the exchange of money that demeans [sex workers], but the context in which the exchange is made." (p. 2). Therefore, there are significant implications of power related to the different conceptions of the 'commodified' body, indicating again that conceiving of sex workers as ontologically synonymous with the sexual transactions they undertake is ultimately harmful, and not conducive to a recognition of their rights and wellbeing.

The 'socialised' body

Adding to our understanding of the relationship between the body and the self, the socialised body describes how social relations and interactions, informed by social hierarchies and power relations, are both internalised into sex workers' identity, and

⁸ Wardlow (2006) in her book 'Wayward Women' provides an interesting analysis of, as she conceptualises, Huli women's 'encompassed agency' in Papua New Guinea. Basically, women's 'encompassed agency' refers to "the more general expectation that women subordinate their desires to the needs of their families or clans" (p. 4). So, women undertake "action that produces effects, but effects whose ends are beyond the individual's actions and for a wider purpose" (p. 6).

observed in social encounters (Wolkowitz, 2006). Repressive imposed conditions around female sexuality and sexual expression, and the blame associated with divergence from those conditions, also play a role in the socialised body/self of sex workers. Through the socialised body, sex workers' level of autonomy may be seen to vary depending on "social status, organisation of the sex trade, perception of their rights and biological history." (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 135). The socialised body, then, also indicates the significance of law and policies regarding sex work. Punitive laws regarding sex work increases the vulnerability of sex workers as they are treated as criminals, thus have no recourse to justice in instances of abuse, directly impacting their ability to claim their rights.

The 'body-without-organs'

The concept of 'body-without-organs' (BwO) delves deeper into the desire and fantasy aspects of sexuality. The BwO observes how desire and pleasure moves beyond the mere physiology of a body with organs, as desire "is an autonomous force that defies social determination" (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 137). The movement into the transcendental sphere of desire, therefore, can entail that "the pleasures and play of body contact potentially exceed and even transform the discourses and social relations that contain it." (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 137).

However, when considering desire and pleasure in the context in which it becomes manifest, it would seem simplistic to deny that the fantasies which inform pleasure and desire are mediated by certain discourses (Brewis & Linstead, 2000). The BwO is important in considering the role sexual fantasy plays in sexual transactions, and the ways in which pleasure and desire may be derived from both clients and sex workers during transactions. However, discourses still operate, and can influence those spaces of fantasy and desire, and therefore may not always be exceeded and transformed during the manifestations of pleasure.

The 'agential' body

The 'agential' body is the final way in which the body, specifically sex workers' bodies, are argued to constitute the self. The agential body refers to the ways in which sex workers "try to resist objectification by using their bodies to defend themselves"

(Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 138) as subjects. The agential body acknowledges the individual agency which may be exercised throughout a transaction, and, further, how the “body is ‘served’ or re-served through the labour of self-presentation.” (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 139). Thus, the agential body looks more at the negotiation of power between the sex worker and the client, and how sex workers manage and install self-preservation boundaries. These boundaries may include refusing to kiss clients, or using drugs and alcohol, although the latter represents a more problematic ‘technique of the self’ (Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988; Wolkowitz, 2006).

Sex workers may develop codes, or boundaries of physical access to their bodies, and preparatory routines or rituals in order to establish a “psychological context” for their work (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p. 215). Maintaining secrecy around their work may also be seen as a ‘technique of the self,’ to limit who has access to and awareness of their self-as-sex-worker. Chapkis (1997) also explores the relationship between sex workers and their sense of self, and notes that, while full identification with the emotional labour of sex work can occur amongst sex workers, this often leads to burn-out. Alternatively, by applying various distancing techniques or boundaries during transactions, sex workers may establish some level of emotional management and boundary maintenance, and thus a preservation of the self. The monetary exchange may be in itself a symbol that sex with clients is “purely physical and uninvolved” (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p. 211), differentiating interactions with clients as essentially commercial transactions, as opposed to sex and relationships in their private lives (Brewis & Linstead, 2000).

Self-preservation and re-selving through performance, (sex) politics, and the process of economic transaction, may play a role at each level of the body-self, discussed above. Accordingly, the body and the self, and the relationship between the two, are not matters completely out of control of sex workers as they undertake and negotiate the terms of their work. Indeed, for many sex workers “their ‘real’ selves are located outside of work, removed from encounters with clients” (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p. 217). The level of control sex workers have over their working environments plays a significant role in the extent to which sex workers may manage and maintain their own

boundaries and emotions in relation to their labour. Furthermore, the way in which sex workers view their occupation

– as a career, as a stop-gap, as a means of developing self, as the only choice in particular socio-economic circumstances, as a feminist protest, as a flexible and well-numerated alternative to the 9 to 5 etc. – makes a significant difference to their self-construction and to the degree of self-reflexivity they demonstrate in their everyday activities (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p. 239).

Thus, a consideration of the ways in which sex workers relate to and view their occupation within their life, and in relation to their sense of self, is important in attempting to grasp sex workers as not only workers, but people who occupy different spaces and roles which are separable from the actual sexual transactions.

By situating sex work within the context of body work, sex work can be seen in relation to other, similar forms of labour, as opposed to a completely separate category of employment. Sex work, as with other forms of body work, uses the body both in the production of labour, as well as the direct interaction with the body of another person in the receiving of the outputs of that labour. Body work also encapsulates the complexity of sex work as a form of labour which intersects with class and race. Analysis of sex work, therefore, entails multifaceted understandings of the relationships between the worker and their clients, which often depends on the “specificity of the bodily encounter” (Wolkowitz, 2002, p. 505) the body worker must negotiate. As noted above, stigma and discrimination play a role in more marginal types of body work, of which sex work is a part. In this way, sex work is situated in a contentious ideological nexus between the free market, and the pre-market values and codes of behaviour from which the forces of stigma, shame, and other forms of discrimination emerge.

The ways in which the body is seen to constitute the self were discussed above, and are important in revealing how the ways in which sex workers are viewed ontologically impacts the extent to which they are conceived as agents, and, therefore, capable of claiming their rights. One specific set of human rights which is particularly prominent in the working lives of sex workers are their sexual and reproductive health rights. The

extent to which sex workers are able to claim their sexual and reproductive health rights is indicative of their levels of wellbeing, which will now be discussed.

2.5 Sexual and reproductive health rights, sex work, and development

Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) are a particular set of rights which are significant for work in the sex industry, and are relevant to this research as a measurement of wellbeing amongst sex workers. Broadly speaking, SRHR constitute the right to a healthy pregnancy and child birth, to non-discriminatory access to modern contraceptive and family planning services, and include the right to prevention of, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STI) and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and the right to safe and consensual relationships (Glasier, Gülmezoglu, Schmid, Moreno, & VanLook, 2006).

The issue of sexual and reproductive health in relation to sex work is a contentious one. Sex workers are particularly vulnerable to “the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, HIV, unwanted pregnancy and other threats to health” (Overs & Hawkins, 2011). Such ‘other threats’ include a lack of legal rights and protection in the case of rape, and other abuses, including murder (Nagle, 1997). However, this vulnerability can, and often is, interpreted in a way which blames sex workers for the spread of disease (Nagle, 1997; Wolkowitz, 2006). This blame enhances stigmatising and discriminatory perceptions of sex workers, driving sex work further away from achieving decriminalisation⁹ and the recognition of sex work as an occupation where “SRHR could become a matter of labour, rather than criminal law.” (Overs & Hawkins, 2011). Furthermore, where sex work is illegal, or on the legal peripheries, and sex workers are subject to significant abuses and discrimination, this in turn affects their willingness trust and therefore engage with health workers who may similarly express disapproval, or invoke feelings of shame and distress in sex workers (Rekart, 2015).

⁹ Decriminalisation is different from legalisation in that decriminalisation means removing something, e.g. sex work, from the crimes act. Existing legalisation models “typically disadvantage sex workers because the restrictive conditions under which they can legally work drives them into the illegal sector and unsafe situations.” (Harrington, 2010). Decriminalisation, however, places sex work under commercial law as opposed to criminal law, thus the “sex work industry then becomes subject to the same controls and regulations as those under which other businesses operate.” (Abel, Fitzgerald, Healy, & Taylor, 2010; see also Amnesty International, 2016).

However, sex workers' sexual and reproductive health rights also play a significant role in the overall recognition of the wellbeing of sex workers. This point is exemplified by the fact that, ironically perhaps, the HIV/AIDS epidemic brought about an increased awareness of the sex worker demographic (Chapkis, 1997). The HIV/AIDS epidemic sparked a large amount of research into HIV amongst high risk groups, including sex workers, and, subsequently, the extent of the risks and barriers to healthcare for sex workers was emphasised (Jeal & Salsbury, 2013, p. 369). Furthermore, revealing the significant risks associated with sex work in the context of a terrifying epidemic led to the participation of sex workers at an international level. HIV/AIDS conferences of the 1990s, for instance, provided a "platform for a revitalization of the international movement" (Kempadoo, 2003, p. 147) of sex workers.

In terms of the shift in the international development lens on sex work, in 2009/2010 the United Nations, moving as well with the new wave of the public health concerns for sex workers, called for a revision of laws, policies, and practices/behaviours impeding HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, including amongst sex workers (Overs & Hawkins, 2011; UNFPA, UNAIDS, APNSW, 2010). Perhaps it is through the lens of sexual and reproductive health rights, then, that the walls of stigma can be chipped away at, or at least put aside for the 'greater good' of achieving safer and healthier working conditions for sex workers. However, as the theories of GAD and transnational feminism denote, the analysis of SRHR needs to be contemplated within the specific contexts relevant to certain groups of sex workers. What SRHR does provide is a rights-based platform for the analysis of sex workers' wellbeing. Below I consider gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu in order to contextualise the (gendered) conditions which influence ni-Vanuatu sex workers' lives and wellbeing.

2.6 Gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu

The key theoretical frameworks of GAD and transnational feminism argue for the analysis of sex work to be situated firmly in an understanding of the relevant gender constructs and socio-cultural contexts. Accordingly, here I consider some literature on gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu, which will provide a contextual orientation for my analysis on sex work in Vanuatu. I begin by discussing the concept of

developman, before providing an overview of gender relations in Vanuatu. Finally, I discuss the issue of human rights in the context of Vanuatu, and Luganville in particular, revealing the importance of contextualising the concept of rights, as well as gender and power. The literature below follows on from the theories discussed above, while importantly providing the contextual groundwork for this thesis.

Sahlins (2005) has encapsulated some of the fundamental differences in how Pacific Islanders adopt Western commodities in the concept of 'developman'. The concept of 'developman' refers to 'tradition' as a "distinctive way of changing" (p. 36) in relation to that which is introduced. Where Western society has underlying values of individualism and self-betterment, Pacific peoples "are still embedded in relationships of kith and kin [... and] have not yet acknowledged the radical opposition between 'satisfaction' and 'obligation' by which we [Westerners] rule our lives." (Sahlins, 2005, p. 23). Furthermore, modern day Pacific, and Vanuatu in particular, cannot be described in the dichotomous terms of tradition versus modernity, as neither terms denote a static state of affairs (Sahlins, 2005). Rather developman is a non-linear process which describes how people understand, adopt (or discard) and mould that which is 'introduced', and generally cope with contradictory colonial or neo-colonial structures (Sahlins, 2005; Mitchell, 2000).

The concept of 'developman' is important in considering gender relations in Vanuatu. As noted above, 'tradition' refers to a 'distinctive way of changing', yet gender relations in Vanuatu underpin who controls these changes. Here it seems appropriate to rephrase 'gender and development' as 'gender and developman', as this phrase more accurately embodies the unique and complex ways in which various external influences have been mingled with, adopted, and resisted in Vanuatu in ways that have transformed gender relations. 'Gender and developman' contextualises gender not as a stagnant form, construct or symbol adhering only to individuals' sexed bodies. Rather this concept observes the ways in which events, things, and people are gendered and re-gendered as they interact and cope with introduced commodities, beliefs, and ways. Furthermore, historical gender and power relations in Vanuatu have underpinned the distinctive ways Vanuatu has changed, and who has control over

Vanuatu's social, political, and economic transitions. I will now give a necessarily partial historical overview of gender and power in Vanuatu.

Literature on gender in Melanesia has been primarily concerned with the subject of Melanesian masculinities (Taylor, 2008a; Jolly, 2016). Masculinities in Melanesia form two major groupings, or "personifications of male power" (Jolly, 1994, p. 208), 'big men' and 'great men', which denote to varying extents male only cults, masculine ritual and/or political hierarchies, the exchange of goods as gifts or wealth, and various initiation or grading ceremonies (Jolly, 1991). Jolly (1994) points out, however, that 'big men' and 'great men' societies do not necessarily exist in opposition, or on an either/or basis. The key dimensions which Jolly (1994) observes are the individual/collective orientation, the extent to which kinship is a key principle, and the secularity/sanctity of rituals. 'Great men' societies are typically collectively, and kinship orientated, where masculinity and authority is achieved via sacred initiation rituals within male-only cults. 'Big men' societies are typically more individually orientated, where male authority is based on secular rank-taking ceremonies of competitive exchange, which "creates values only contingently involved with kinship" (Strathern, 1988, p. 47). Societies where the social structures were closer to 'big men' systems of competitive exchange tended to more readily engage with capitalist incursions, for example, via cash cropping (Jolly, 1994). Thus, here I will focus primarily on the characteristics of 'big men' societies, as the features of this social structure reveal more clearly the ways in which Melanesian societies, and masculine configurations, transitioned into capitalism during colonial eras.

The 'big man' system of rank-taking is one of 'competitive ceremonial exchange' of "unlike for like" (Jolly, 1994, p. 208), for instance valuables can be exchanged for wives in the form of 'bride price' to substitute the loss of her labour and blood in childbirth (Jolly, 1994). Male ranks or grades, basically, "are attained by the ritual sacrifice and exchange of pigs" and, subsequently, "[m]embership of a grade entitles a person to certain insignia, and to a new name or title" (Jolly, 1994, p. 178). There is also respect, various privileges, leadership and power (especially over peace-keeping) associated with attaining a high rank (Jolly, 1994). Regarding the 'competitive' element of ceremonial exchange as part of rank-taking, this refers to the necessity of the

production of goods for slaughter and exchange during rituals in order to attain a higher ranking. Historically in 'big man' societies the sponsorship of wealth, especially pigs, has been central to grade-taking rituals, entailing "elaborate networks of pig credit and finance, one lends out pigs, to call them back later on [...]. The more extensive a man's credit networks, the more prestigious his ritual" (Jolly, 1994, p. 207). The accumulation of goods for sponsorship, therefore, was important in reserving sponsors for one's own future rank-taking ceremonies, where one's past sponsorship is reciprocated.

Above I drew on Sahlin's (2005) concept of *developman*, and 'big man' societies reveal the intricate relationship between 'satisfying' one's attainment of a rank, and the various, and ongoing 'obligations' that entails, for example towards one's sponsors. I also drew on the concept of *developman* in order to contextualise gender in Vanuatu, which adheres not only to persons, but also to things, practices, and events. This point is important to expand on as it provides a historical gendered orientation for understanding the subsequent ways in which ni-Vanuatu, and predominantly ni-Vanuatu men, have understood and co-opted aspects colonisation, Christianity and capitalism.

As Strathern (1988) explains, exchange processes or transactions in Melanesia are not 'gender neutral', but rather "men's and women's ability to transact with this or that item stems from the power this gendering [of the 'gift' or valuable for exchange] gives some persons at the expense of others, as does the necessity and burden of carrying through transactions" (p. xii). Where a valuable for exchange is gendered male, often in the sense that it is believed to have literally spawned from the body of a man¹⁰, this entails male ownership and control of these goods (Jolly, 1994)¹¹. While women's labour is involved in the production of valuables, the deeper symbolic associations between valuables for exchange and men entails that women are excluded from

¹⁰ The gendering of things as female, on the other hand, may denote its supernatural potency, thus this may bring about the containment of these things due to the threat feminine objects pose to men, and does not necessarily entail the socio-political authority of women.

¹¹ In South Pentecost, for example, pigs are believed to have originated from the testicles of a man, Wahgere, and yams from the buttocks of an elderly man, Singit (Jolly, 1994). Both yams and pigs are traditionally very valuable objects of wealth used in ritual exchange.

exerting control¹² over the production and distribution of goods on an equal footing with men (Jolly, 1994). Women's labour is thus 'eclipsed' during ritual exchanges as goods of supreme value, such as pigs and yams, are "not only embodied male labour but transformations of male bodies." (Jolly, 1994, p. 85).

The gendering of objects of such ritual significance and authority reveals the nature of gender and power in Vanuatu, including in relation to the transacting of wealth. Ceremonial exchanges of wealth have mostly been made between men in Vanuatu. As Jolly (1994) explains, wealth in ceremonial exchanges "takes on a singular male identity in transactions with other males" (Jolly, 1994, p. 85)¹³. While a man's mother and wife may be central to who ritual payments and sacrifices are made during male grade taking rituals, it is the woman's agnates¹⁴ who receive the fruits of the exchange, not the woman herself¹⁵ (Jolly, 1994). Even in societies where women can also take grades, female grades seem to be either a part of an autonomous female ranking system, or "as an appendage on the male graded society" where "[w]omen are conferred titles by men, [and] there are no female sponsorships" (Jolly, 1994, p. 184-185). Thus, the power and influence associated with the gendering of things seems to entail that men preside over grade taking rituals and exchanges of wealth, and the authority ascribed to attaining higher grades.

Interactions between men and women, especially husbands and wives, as opposed to the transactions made between men, are "unmediated – they have a direct effect on the disposition of each other, they do not detach parts of their bodies and give

¹² Women do have some say over the distribution of pigs during exchange ceremonies at birth, death, marriage and grade-taking, but, to quote Jolly (1994), "this is a moral power deriving from the fact that they perform more of the daily labour in herding, rather than from the rights of equal ownership with men." (p. 73).

¹³ This point is also important in differentiating indigenous ni-Vanuatu understandings of wealth from Marxist conceptions of labour, namely that "the work of a person is presumed to be naturally attached to that person" (Jolly, 1994, p. 84; see also Strathern, 1988) thus ought to be owned by them. Here, however, the labour process (both male and female contributions) becomes 'eclipsed' during ceremonies (Jolly, 1994); the products are transformed into wealth which is controlled by men for the purposes of the elevation of their ritual authority.

¹⁴ The agnates of the mother or wife refer to her paternal kinsmen, usually her brothers, or her real or classificatory fathers (i.e. one's father's brothers) (Jolly, 1994).

¹⁵ Jolly (1994) notes how if payments/sacrifices are not made to the appropriate male relatives of his wife and mother, they have the power to inflict "misfortune, illness, even death" (p. 109), and, in the case of the mother's agnates, ongoing impacts after death by impeding the path of the spirit of the offender.

personified things to each other.” (Jolly, 1994, p. 85). Procreation is an obvious ‘direct effect’ of male/female relations, and reproductive labour is central to the values of kinship in Vanuatu¹⁶. The ‘direct effect’ which men and women can have on each other also underpins various rituals (including *kastom* payments such as ‘bride price’, discussed below), and taboos (denoting the segregation of men and women). The post-partum sex taboo, for instance, and various societies placing taboos on menstrual blood are deemed essential as women’s blood is believed to be a potent and supernatural force which can make men ill (Jolly, 1994; Allen, 1967). The loss of a woman’s blood during childbirth is also necessarily compensated via payments by the father and his kin to the mother’s agnates, often multiple times throughout the life of the child due to the ongoing debt of the mother’s blood loss, lest the child become ill or die (Jolly, 1994).

As I conceptualised earlier, ‘gender and development’ embodies Vanuatu’s ‘distinctive ways of changing’ which are also gendered. Above I gave a historical overview gender relations in Vanuatu, including male trajectories of power and prestige in ‘big man’ societies. However, it is also important to consider the ways in which other factors, principally colonisation, Christianity, capitalism, and post-colonial state politics, have mingled with, and transformed gender relations in Vanuatu. One crucial point is that, since the latter half of the 19th Century in Vanuatu, young men have made up the majority of migrant labour forces (indentured, as in the period of ‘blackbirding’¹⁷ for example, and voluntary). Thus, they not only gained access to, and control over new forms of religion, wealth and other foreign commodities, but also to linguistic developments via interaction with Melanesian creole languages on plantations (Jolly, 1994). Today, men continue make up the majority of those who undertake the Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) in Australia and the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme in New Zealand. Pacific Island women, on the other hand, made up only

¹⁶ This is evidenced by rituals dedicated to fertility, and the rearing of strong and healthy children (Jolly, 1994 – see chapter 5). Sexual intercourse is also of central importance, and may be acknowledged in marriage ceremonies and other rituals, for instance the harvesting of yams (Jolly, 1994).

¹⁷ Blackbirding refers to a period in the 19th and early 20th centuries where South Pacific Islanders (mostly men, but also some women) worked as labourers in cotton and sugar plantations in Queensland, Australia, Samoan Islands, and Fiji (Blackbirding, 2006). While some people left more or less voluntarily (though often deception was used for recruitment), there were many instances of kidnap and coercion by plantation owners.

11.5% of SWP and RSE workers from 2013-14 (Chattier, 2015; Ball, Bailey, Haley & Keen, 2015)¹⁸. Jolly (1994) recalls the ways in which men have controlled women's access to that which was introduced, which may continue to some extent to be a pattern given the male majority in newer forms of labour migration. Women in the communities in South Pentecost where Jolly was based in the 1970s, for example, were barred by their men from learning Bislama (Vanuatu's creole language) due to fear that learning the language would lead their women to vacate their communities and pursue prostitution. Accordingly, many ni-Vanuatu men prioritise 'holding their women tight', that is, not allowing women's departure from their village communities, or engagement with foreign 'ways' in order that they remain faithful to the path of *kastom* (Jolly, 1994; Cummings, 2013).

The authority of men over the 'distinctive ways of changing' in Vanuatu, and access to various introduced goods and principles, including "a new language of persons and things" (Jolly, 1994, p. 117), has ramifications in the post-colonial state. Colonial patriarchal values, for instance that state politics is a 'man's game', have reinforced the development of ni-Vanuatu male's "insular conception of *kastom* in support of arguments against women's participation in the public sphere" (Douglas, 2002, p. 17). Thus, while the association of wealth with embodiments of male endeavour and as transformations of male bodies has historical roots (linking also with socio-political authority), colonial ideologies, capitalism, and Christianity have been integrated into, and justified the continuation of male domination in Vanuatu. While Christian missionaries, for instance, stated their role in improving the lot of women by condemning practices which they saw as cruel or objectifying, they also introduced notions of female domesticity (Jolly, M., 2000; Jolly, 1994). Additionally, the 'civilising' processes and rhetoric of missionaries brought with it other symbols of femininity, such as modesty in dress and behaviour. Ni-Vanuatu women's interactions with Christian missionaries, for instance, was usually centred on Christian women's groups and sewing classes set up by missionary wives (Douglas, 2002). Colonial women came

¹⁸ Cummings (2013) provides interesting insight into the gendered dynamics of ni-Vanuatu migrant workers who have been a part of the RSE scheme in New Zealand, recounting broader social and gendered perceptions of the scheme, as well as men and women's reflections of their experiences of the scheme.

to Vanuatu most likely as the wives of colonial politicians, plantation owners and religious leaders. The position of these women, infused with gendered paradigms of wifely, domestic duty, reveals the nature of ni-Vanuatu women's engagement with the feminine side of colonial and missionary forces.

However, while women in Vanuatu are mostly marginalised in national, political arenas, this is not to say they are passive recipients of introduced ways, values and beliefs. Ni-Vanuatu women have also interpreted and adopted elements of introduced ideologies, such as Christianity. Margaret Jolly (2000) notes how at a conference in Port Vila on 'Violence and the Family in Vanuatu' ni-Vanuatu women observed the value of mothers as having the power, and responsibility, to teach children messages from the Bible of "conjugal love and domestic peace." (p. 131). Here women have incorporated Christianity, including Christian, and, more broadly, Western notions of 'domestic' life in a way which supports and enhances their position¹⁹. In general, women's church groups are widespread across communities in Vanuatu, and have brought about a form of female collectivity, or solidarity, which is potentially empowering for women (Douglas, 2002). Given that women hardly benefit from national citizenship, Douglas (2002) argues for the centrality of women's church groups as providing a platform for women's engagement socially and politically, and in the cash economy as women's groups often also produce goods for sale. Here we begin to grasp the complex nature of gender and power in Vanuatu, coloured by an intricate and ongoing negotiation of multiple ideologies, histories and subjectivities.

Today, both *kastom* elders²⁰, and men more broadly, have arguably less control over the movements of young people and, importantly, young women who are drawn to life in town. Broadly speaking, town is associated with foreign ways, and money (and therefore poverty, particularly in peri-urban settlements), a corrupting force and the source of most social and moral ills (Mitchell, 2000). Urbanisation is complex in

¹⁹ Compare this, for example, to another noted perception in Vanuatu of a Christian husband's "conjugal rights to sex and to babies" (Jolly, 2002, p. 196).

²⁰ Jolly (1994) writes of older men she encountered who lamented the access younger men have to modern forms of wealth via migrating to urban areas, such as Luganville and Port Vila. I also distinctly remember a conversation I had with the chief of a village near South Santo who similarly expressed immense disappointment in the number of young people drawn to town life, forgetting their *kastom* along the way.

Vanuatu. While there are increasingly generations of ni-Vanuatu who grow up in town, the amalgamation of people from different islands and cultures, and the maintenance of connections to, and movements between, people's island of origin, speaks to the notion of develop*man*, where kinship ties still underpin the various (often economic) rationales for moving to town (Mitchell, 2000; Jolly, 2011).

Part of this ongoing association between ni-Vanuatu and their island and *kastom* may also signify the challenge of the larger prevalence of colonial systems in urban areas, such as Westminster style judicial and policing systems, which are less easily interpreted and adopted on ni-Vanuatu terms²¹. Understandings of the violence, or corrupting forces of town life, thus, are twofold. On the one hand, town life is perceived literally via historical associations of colonial, and modern-day police use of "physical beatings or strategies of humiliation" as disciplinary measures (Mitchell, 2000, p. 198). On the other hand, town life is conceived in terms of rupture of indigenous ways, embodied in Bislama in the word '*kastom*' which is often used as political rhetoric symbolising the continuity of 'before' (Jolly, 1994).

The capitalist commodity economy is important to touch on further in order to illuminate the complex gendered dynamics of both the ways in which capitalism reveals continuity, and rupture from historical gender relations and practices. The practice of 'bride price' is a key example which I will draw on here. 'Bride price' is a *kastom* by which a man's family gives a woman's agnates valuables, such as tusked pigs, woven mats, and shell money, in order for the two of them to become married (Jolly, 2015). This provision of goods in some communities is reciprocated to a lesser extent by the woman's side, and the process denotes the joining of the two kinship groups (Jolly, 2015). Marriage could also entail more complex and intergenerational kinship relations, and payments could commence before the marriage, in order to 'reserve' a particular marital arrangement, and, in some contexts, continue throughout the marriage, for example after the birth of children (Jolly, 2015). 'Bride price', as mentioned, has often been observed as the first in a series of compensation payments

²¹ See Jolly (2011). In this article Jolly explains how the majority of young people have stated a preference for chiefs to deal with them if they get into trouble, and observes the "inaccessibility of state law for most of the population", and "the pervasive practice of police brutality" (p. 199).

to the woman's family for the loss of her labour, and for the future loss of her blood in childbirth.

Concerns about 'bride price' practices have emerged since the first explorers and missionaries visited Vanuatu (Jolly, 2015). Accordingly, debates have also emerged over whether 'bride price' is a gift, or symbolic of the commodification of women, entailing that a husband has possession over his wife due to the fact he has paid for her. Criticisms of 'bride price' mostly centre on the latter, and the integration of capitalist commodity values have contributed to the expansion of this conception (Jolly, 2015). Money is now often incorporated into, or sometimes replaces *kastom* payments of 'bride price'. Consequently, money has been seen to 'distort' the practice, not only via the inflation of the financial cost of 'bride price', but also in terms of perceptions of what the payment means (Jolly, 2015). Significantly, what the inclusion of cash in 'bride price' denotes is the perception of women as a commodity within the marital transaction. This perception, however, does not eliminate the former notion of 'bride price' as a gift-like exchange signalling the ongoing relations between clans. Rather 'bride price', as with other aspects of gender relations in modern Vanuatu, can be seen as a complex internalisation, and mingling of the two conceptions (Jolly, 2015).

The above analysis of the transitioning conceptions of 'bride price' reveal how the incorporation of capitalist values of individual satisfaction and possession, and symbols of prestige linked to accumulative wealth under this system, have been co-opted in gendered ways. The 'wives-as-commodities' concept is an example of the ways in which ni-Vanuatu men control the 'distinctive ways of changing' and co-opting elements of introduced wealth, power and principles. Accordingly, ni-Vanuatu men have been reported to conceive of 'bride price' as an economic transaction which entitles them to control over their wives, including the use of violence (Jolly, 2015; Hess, 2009). However, as Jolly (2015) points out:

...perhaps this [oscillating understandings of 'bride price' gift and/or commodity] is not just dependent on the temporal phases in a wedding and beyond, but on the gendered perspective of the interlocutor. For a violent husband, the worth of a woman *does* seem to be the equivalent of her bride price. (p. 72, emphasis in original)

It is important, then, to consider not only broader notions of *kastom* and modernity along gendered lines, but also more intimate negotiations of those terms, and ‘ways’, especially as they relate to power dynamics. This necessitates a critical engagement with the ways in which global capitalism has been incorporated into ‘bride price’ transactions, both overtly via cash payments, and in terms of capitalist commodity-based values.

Just as ‘bride price’ denotes a complex intermingling of both *kastom* and foreign ways and values in its current conception and practice, the notion of rights is equally composite, especially in relation to gender. Women’s rights movements in Vanuatu have been resisted due to their association with “foreign aid and development, coupled with a local understanding of rights as relational and hierarchical” (Taylor, 2008a, p. 131). The perception of women’s rights as a foreign notion is inherently difficult when considered against the backdrop of male domination of both state and village politics (both in churches and traditional meeting houses). Male authority is mutually justified in these two political spaces via ‘insular notions of *kastom*’, noted above, and the patriarchal values of colonial and missionary influences. Conversely, women’s rights dialogues are broadly considered to be anti-*kastom*, pro-divorce, and of general “disruption of ancestral order” (Jolly, 2001, p. 194). Thus, as Douglas (2002) notes, in Vanuatu “*feminism* and *activism* remain dirty words, laden with connotations of heartless globalization and irreligion” (p. 21). Accordingly, these and any other associated words, have largely been omitted by women’s groups, including more secular organisations such as the Vanuatu Women’s Centre.

An example which brings us to the context of this research, namely Luganville, will illuminate the complexity of discussing rights in Vanuatu. In Luganville, a group primarily made up of male chiefs and church leaders have established the ‘Violence Against Men and Family Protection Centre’ (VAM) in response to vast changes in legal proceedings and foreign-funded promotions of “Western-style ‘women’s rights’” (Taylor, 2008b, p. 167). Divorce, child custody, and court proceedings in domestic violence and rape cases are some examples of the ways in which the VAM group perceive of ‘women’s rights’ as prioritising women over men. These ‘legal interventions’ by women’s rights organisations are seen to undermine “Vanuatu’s

‘natural’ *kastom* and Christian patriarchal gender order and, in doing so, pose a serious threat to the socio-economic productivity of the nation-state” (Taylor, 2008b, p. 167). Women, and women’s rights dialogues on Western terms, using Western vocabulary, are seen as distinctly anti-*kastom*, thus lacking in respect for the underpinning laws and values of ni-Vanuatu society.

An interesting point about VAM is the way in which it not only exists in opposition to local women’s rights groups, for example the ‘Sanma Women’s Counselling Centre,’ yet it also mirrors such organisation’s structure in offering counselling and legal advice (Taylor, 2008b). While the extent of the support base for VAM is not clear, VAM reveals the process of grappling with social and political transitions in a particularly gendered way, and the issues related to the control of those transitions in accordance with underlying structures and principles (Taylor, 2008b).

Overall, this example is revealing of the need to engage with rights on a contextual basis. Western notions hinge on individualism, where “possession, ownership, control and ideas of power [exist] in terms of one-to-one relations between unitary subjects and objects” and “‘male’ or ‘female’ emerge as key identity categories within the unitary state of individuality” (Taylor, 2008b, p. 171). However, in Vanuatu the perception of the collective elevation of women and their rights is intimately associated with broader notions of hierarchy and power. As Jolly (1994) explains: “women are seen as differentiated not between themselves so much as between men” (p. 204). Similarly, Strathern (1988) argues that there is “no common measure” (p. 49) between men and women. Thus, women’s rights, when brought onto the same platform as men’s rights (in the sense of their competitive control or entitlement) for the purpose of comparison or measurement, are conceived as developing at the expense of men, indeed to eventually dominate and control them, which is perceived as a rupture of the ‘natural’ order (Taylor, 2008b).

Gender in Vanuatu needs to be understood in broad terms, which encompass the multiplicity of factors which underpin life in Vanuatu, as GAD and transnational feminism literature also emphasise. Gender, power, and rights are relational concepts, which have complex roots across history and modernity, the local and the global, indigenous and exogenous, even human and ethereal (Taylor, 2008b). Sex work is

further revealing of some of the challenges of the gender, power, rights nexus in Vanuatu, and will now be considered.

2.7 ‘Women blong rod’ long Vanuatu (‘Women of the road’ in Vanuatu)

Vanuatu is an archipelago nation in the South Pacific with a population of 289,321 (Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2016); population growth of about 20 live births per day; and with 29.6% of the population under 15 years (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division, 2016). Vanuatu has over a hundred indigenous languages, however, Bislama (an English-based creole language) is Vanuatu’s lingua franca, and children who end up in formal education will go on to learn either English or French. Vanuatu gained independence from their English and French colonisers on the 30th of July, 1980. Since independence, the capital city of Port Vila, on Efate Island, has seen an upsurge in ni-Vanuatu moving into town to find work in the cash economy. However, finding paid work, especially for the huge youth population, is often more of a dream than a reality, resulting in very high unemployment rates and few opportunities to take part in further training (Vanuatu Young People’s Project, 2006). The Vanuatu Young People’s Project (2006) report also states how even for those who are able to gain paid employment of some kind, wages are low.

In light of the lack of economic opportunities for young people, the report also acknowledges an “increase in transactional sex work in Port Vila,” (Vanuatu Young People’s Project, 2006, p. 56) which, in this report, was mostly based on anecdotal evidence. However, this statement has been elsewhere substantiated, including in a UNICEF (2010) report of a survey undertaken with a sample of 510 youth from Port Vila, Malakula, and Tanna. Of the 510 youth involved in the survey, 326 had had sex, 66 (including 22 males) had engaged in commercial sex (i.e. sex in exchange for money), and 101 in transactional sex (i.e. sex in exchange for other goods such as alcohol, kava, marijuana, clothes, food, or transport). Only 39% of those who had engaged in commercial or transactional sex reported used a condom the last time they had sex.

McMillan and Worth (2011a) have provided a more in depth analysis of sex work in Port Vila, having interviewed eighteen female sex workers, and two male sex workers from November to December, 2010. Their report provides some insight into how ni-Vanuatu sex workers work, and the particular issues they face in the context of Vanuatu's capital city. The report identifies two key ways of working amongst sex workers in Port Vila. The first is more independently based work, where sex workers make prior arrangements during the day with clients who they meet later at an agreed time. The second is in small peer groups, often in nightclubs or kava bars, where the transaction takes place more or less immediately (McMillan & Worth, 2011a). Furthermore, the report also states that some hotel managers have some sex workers' cell phone numbers which they can call should a guest request sexual services (McMillan & Worth, 2011a). The latter of the two key ways sex workers undertake their work in Port Vila was noted in the report as being more common, and relates to sex workers associating selling sex with participating in (and being able to pay for) a social life in town.

In addition to close knit peer groups playing an important role in the selling of sex in Port Vila, McMillan and Worth (2011a) also note how many sex workers started selling sex at an early age (under 16), and that it was their friends who introduced them to sex work (McMillan & Worth, 2011a). Furthermore, many participants in McMillan and Worth's (2011a) report also revealed that their first sexual encounter was paid sex, and for some "the information that 'boys will pay' was one of the first things they learnt about sex." (McMillan & Worth, 2011a, p. 9). Given the almost normalised nature of receiving money for sex expressed by some young people, as well as the vulnerability of young people who struggle to afford life in town, sex work becomes a conceivable option for income generation. Disillusionment due to past abusive relationships was also cited by participants as a reason behind engaging in sex work.

Disappointing past relationships and the economic pressures of living in town, especially compared to village life, were noted above as a key reason for people entering into sex work in Port Vila. However, the gender inequities also noted by sex workers in McMillan and Worth (2011a) reveal specific vulnerabilities for ni-Vanuatu sex workers. For instance, women who are perceived to be sexually active or

promiscuous, even if the sexual activity was forced, are often vulnerable to further sexual assault (McMillan & Worth, 2011a). The threats to sex workers, due to the stigma and shame associated with being sexually active, are compounded by sex work being seen as a product of modernisation. Thus sex workers are seen as a direct threat to *kastom*, or “that which distinguishes the indigenous from the foreign” (Cummings, 2008, p. 133). Foreignness and its ties to *rabis fasin* (dirty or trashy behaviour, including ‘Western’ dressing up, e.g. women wearing trousers, short skirts/dresses, or shorts) also has links to what is referred to as *rabis sik* (i.e. sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS) (Cummings, 2008).

The prevalence of gossip in ni-Vanuatu society also reproduces the particularly gendered dichotomy of *kastom* versus foreign, enhancing an environment of secrecy and shame, lest one be considered *woman blong rod* (‘woman of the road’), or someone who sells sex. Interestingly, as noted Mitchell (2002, p. 350; see also Cummings, 2008), the stigmatising phrase *woman blong rod* is an inversion of the phrase *rod blong woman* (‘the path of women’). ‘*Rod blong woman*’ refers to a woman’s journey according to *kastom*, and how, through marriage, and reproductive and productive labour, she is to uphold and ensure the upkeep of *kastom*²². Thus, where threats to *kastom* are concerned, women hold a significant portion of the blame. Cummings (2008) refers to this phenomenon as ‘the trouble with trousers,’ where trousers represent ‘town’, modernity, and sexual promiscuity or sex work. This phrase, however, is multifaceted in its conceptualisation of women in Vanuatu, as it also denotes how women often are held responsible for society’s ills, or those things in opposition to *kastom*. Where *trousers* represent modernity and sexual promiscuity, trouble (or *trabol* in Bislama) is a “catch-all term for the social ills associated with rapid urbanisation and modernisation in Port Vila; it is also a euphemism for sexual assault and violence.” (Cummings, 2008, p. 145). As Cummings (2008) observes, the “slippage between trousers and trouble” (p. 145) reveals the culpability of women in, not only undermining cultural traditions, but also in their own sexual and physical assault, where men are understood as victims of their sexual desire.

²² Jolly (1994) also discusses the recognition of women as ‘roads’ or ‘paths’ in kinship systems, including in marriage, and women’s wombs as ‘paths’ to producing more kin.

In line with the victim blaming mentality, and shaming of women who are seen as being contrary to *kastom*, women also seem to subsume responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health, and, by extension, that of men as well. Where people know about STIs, HIV/AIDS and contraceptives²³, the onus tends to be on the woman, not just in the case of her becoming pregnant, but also regarding social and sexual *traboli* (Vanuatu Young People's Project, 2006). This point is also stated in another report on condom use amongst youth in Vanuatu, with contradictory evidence of young women both being fearful of being labelled as promiscuous by carrying condoms, yet being perceived as the ones responsible for condom use as they need to protect themselves more (including in instances of rape), even though women's ability to negotiate their use was minimal (McMillan, 2008). Interestingly, this report also states how young people associate condoms with prostitution, though this association contradicts other suggestions that paying for sex denotes paying to *not* use a condom (McMillan, 2008), including with male sex workers (UNICEF, 2010).

Sex work in Vanuatu seems to expose cultural, moral, and gendered contentions which exist more broadly in relation to sex and women's gendered role in society. Regarding sexual and reproductive health, as condom use is erratic at best, STI rates are high, with sex workers particularly vulnerable to transmitting STIs and HIV (van Gemert, et al., 2014; Zenner & Russell, 2005; Bulu, Gold, & Sladden, 2007). However, the literature also indicates that men tend to not take responsibility for their role in STI/HIV transmission, or as perpetrators of sexual assault and rape. The above literature reveals important aspects of the context in which my research on the SRHR of Luganville-based sex workers takes place. I will now provide a brief overview of Luganville, the setting for this research.

2.8 Luganville: A brief summary of context, and my research

Luganville is a small township on the northern island of Santo in Vanuatu. Based on the 2009 census, the population of Luganville was 13,156, which, according to the

²³ However, several reports reveal a concerning lack of awareness in the area of sexual and reproductive health, e.g. Vanuatu Young People's Project, 2006; McMillan & Worth, 2011a; McMillan, 2013; van Gemert, et al., 2014; Zenner & Russell, 2005.

national population growth rates of about 2.3% per year, would have grown to approximately 15,426 by the end of 2016. Luganville is the capital of Sanma province of Vanuatu, with the provincial government offices situated near the Northern Provincial Hospital, and has historically been a major destination for inter-island labour migration in Vanuatu due to a number of plantations on the island (Jolly, 1987; Jolly, 2016). Luganville also has several ports, and an international airport. Additionally, Luganville was, at the time of this research, undergoing significant developments, chiefly the expansion of the main port funded by the Chinese government with the aims of increasing trade, industry, and tourism to the island. Luganville has also recently seen a variety of urban developments, such as the opening of Planet 107, the first major night club, in 2015.

Figure 1: Map of Vanuatu (Travellers Point, 2016)

Figure 2: The main drag in Luganville, Santo (Thomas, 2016)

Figure 3: Researcher's colleague from NCYC displaying fashion of wearing cargo printed clothing during an outreach programme (Personal photo, 2015; used with permission)

Luganville, and Santo more broadly, has an interesting history. Other than an illustrious secessionist movement lead by Jimmy Stevens of Fanafo village on Santo in the lead up to Vanuatu's independence (Bain, 1994), Luganville was also famously constructed during World War II as a large US military base called 'Buttons' (Lion, 2016)²⁴. Luganville was used to launch attacks on the Japanese, and as an airfield, a naval harbour, and a supply and support base after the Pearl Harbour bombing (Lion, 2016). Evidence of military occupation can still be seen today, for example the famous SS President Coolidge ship wreck²⁵ and Million Dollar Point²⁶, and also in more subtle ways, for instance the fashion of wearing cargo printed clothing (Taylor, 2008b; see Figure 3, p. 44).

Santo also has a reputation for being rough and 'wild', as opposed to the more colonial-like, Westernised Port Vila (Taylor, 2008b). This is perhaps thanks to a stereotype of men in particular from Santo being hard or tough, and often violent, including towards those who have moved to Luganville from other islands for work or schooling²⁷.

Today, Luganville is continuing to grow, with an amalgamation of people from different islands settling in Luganville, with some young people having grown up there, as opposed to their home island. Luganville has one main road with a line of Chinese-owned stores either side, dive companies, and tourist offices and accommodation.

²⁴Jolly (2016) discusses the influences of ni-Vanuatu men's relationships with American military personnel during WWII in terms of shaping masculinities. Americans, in contrast to other colonial settlers, were said to treat ni-Vanuatu men like brothers, and thus have contributed in many ways to the idealised "figure of a hegemonic masculinity: virile, powerful, wealthy, generous, kind even in the midst of gruesome military campaigns" (Jolly, 2016, p. 316). Ni-Vanuatu women, on the other hand, are only recalled in relation to American male's sexual liaisons (Jolly, 2016).

²⁵ The SS President Coolidge, a luxury liner turned troop transported under the U.S. Army service, hit two sea mines coming into the harbour in Luganville, and sunk. Two of the 5,440 passengers died (Pacific Wrecks, 2016).

²⁶ Million Dollar Point is the name of an area just off the coast of Luganville (near the SS President Coolidge wreck) where U.S. military personnel dumped a whole lot of military equipment (including bulldozers, fork lifts, jeeps, trucks, and coke bottles) upon their departure (Lion, 2016; Jolly, 2016).

²⁷ This stereotype was relayed many times to me during my time living in Luganville (and even during interviews for this research), though apparently fights between men from Santo and men from other islands residing in Luganville is less frequent than it has been previously. However, I do recall one particular brawl over the arrests of the Speaker of Parliament, 10 MPs (including the deputy PM, and MPs from Santo), and three of their lawyers on corruption charges in 2015 (Marango, 2015). A man from the Banks islands in the north of Vanuatu had apparently uncovered the incidences of corruption leading to the MPs' arrests, and, accordingly, a fight broke out between men from Santo and men from Banks who were living in Luganville.

Santo also has a scattering of other export industries, for example beef, copra and kava, which are mostly owned and controlled by expatriates (Taylor, 2008b). While ni-Vanuatu are employed in the above sectors, wages are low and the number of jobs are not enough for the growing population, especially considering the large proportion of young people. Thus, many ni-Vanuatu operate in the informal sector, for example the Mamas' Market, where mostly women, often accompanied by children, come into town to sell produce from their gardens. In addition, the local Women's Cooking Association is a collective of women who sell cooked food from a number of stalls around town. Nakamals, or kava bars, are another informal form of employment many ni-Vanuatu (mostly men) undertake, building serving bars, with surrounding seating areas, often attached to their houses.

Luganville is, therefore, a post-colonial township, with a history of expatriate military deployment, and an area which is also currently undergoing rapid development which will bring greater industry, trade, and tourism to the area. Entertainment venues are also appearing to fill modern demands and expectations of urban social life. All of these factors have historical links to the establishment and expansion of the sex work industry (O'Reilly, O'Reilly, & Habegger, 2005; Abel, Fitzgerald, Healy, & Taylor, 2010). Other reports on sex work in the surrounding region of Melanesia note similar factors as integral to the development of sex work industries (Mitchell, 2011; Callick, 2011; Inifiri, 2011; United States Department of State, 2014; Cassey, 2015; Radio New Zealand, 2015). Many reports on sex work in Melanesia also highlight abhorrent human rights abuses, which reveals the significance of this thesis focussing on the rights and wellbeing of sex workers in an expanding industry (Amnesty International, 2016; McMillan & Worth, 2011b; Stolz, Lutunatabua, & Vafo'ou, 2010; Awaiasi, 2012; Protection Project, 2010; United States Department of State, 2014; Herbert, 2007).

With the expansion of the cash economy in and around Luganville, yet with simultaneous underemployment, and employment inequality (for example with men taking the majority of the higher paid jobs in the public sector (Taylor, 2008b; Molisa, 1987)) sex work may emerge to enable economic participation in town which may otherwise be hard to attain. However, as literature on sex work in Port Vila and surrounding parts of Melanesia reveal, sex workers also face significant risks which

ought to be examined. Luganville, therefore, is an important case study in looking into the role sex work plays in developing settings, exposing broader implications of rapid development, and the nexus of gender, power, and rights within that context, and in relation to a vulnerable population.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have explored the significance of understanding the specificities of context in contemplating sex work, particularly regarding gender relations, but also in the ways in which the body is understood ontologically, or as a constitution of the self. Gender and Development (GAD) and transnational feminism both argue for an analysis of the specific conditions in which sex workers work, and how those working conditions interact with the legal, social, and cultural position of workers. In conceiving of sex work as a particular form of 'body work', which has implications of stigma, class, and other forms economic and social vulnerability, sex workers are understood as workers where their working conditions may be scrutinised. Thus, this thesis advocates for a critical human rights analysis focussed on how surrounding conditions influence sex workers' ability to exercise their agency and, therefore, make decisions regarding their wellbeing.

Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) are a particular set of rights which are relevant to the working lives of sex workers. As discussed above, the HIV epidemic brought about an increased awareness of, and concern for, the wellbeing of sex workers as a 'high risk' group. This shift has enabled the voices of sex workers to be more thoroughly represented, as well as their needs and demands recognised. SRHR provide the rights-based framework for this research, focussing on the extent to which sex workers are able to claim these rights.

Gender, power, and rights need to be considered in the context of Vanuatu, which is a complex task. I discussed how gender, power and rights in Vanuatu may be contextualised in the process of 'gender and development'. *Development* refers to a dynamic process where tradition denotes 'distinctive ways of changing', or understanding, incorporating, or rejecting that which is introduced. However, this process is also gendered, both in the sense that introduced commodities, beliefs and

‘ways’ interact with gender constructs, and in the sense that a historical understanding of the gender/power nexus is also key in perceiving who has control over these processes.

Reports have been brought out on sex work in Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila. These reports, particularly McMillan and Worth (2011a), reveal the freelance style of sex work which is often associated with participation in the social life of the capital. However, the moral and physiological responsibility of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) also seems to predominantly burden women. Thus, sex workers are often caught in the cross fire of bearing the burden of responsibility over SRH, whilst lacking authority over sexual transactions. Female sex workers also face a significant amount of stigma due to perceptions of women’s role according to indigenised Christianity and an insular male notion of *kastom*, a role which is defined by reproductive duties and the ‘path of women’, and which is conceived of in contrast to what is foreign, or ‘white’.

Luganville provides an interesting and important setting for understanding sex work in the context of rapid macroeconomic development. There are also reports of sex work occurring, and sex workers facing significant abuses, in the broader region of Melanesia under similar conditions, revealing further the importance of this research in Luganville.

The literature discussed above reveals sex work as a factor of development, and as exposing the critical nexus of gender, power, and rights in specific contexts. Thus, we arrive at my research: ni-Vanuatu sex workers’ experiences of, and limits to claiming their sexual and reproductive health rights in Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu. This project has the dual aim of both comprehending the technicalities of the sex industry in Luganville, including how it works and where it fits into social and economic life, and understanding sex workers’ levels of wellbeing throughout their working lives. Below commences a discussion on the details of my research process, including my methodologies and research method.

Chapter 3: Research Methodologies and Method

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed literature relevant to this thesis, including my ontological position on sex workers, namely that they are people separable from their work – sex workers do not literally sell themselves when they engage in sex work. Social constructivism will be discussed in this chapter as my epistemology for this thesis, followed by the talanoa and sex work methodologies which informed my field research. I will then review the ethical challenges involved in this project, before acknowledging and explaining my positionality within the context of Luganville and this research. Lastly, I will discuss the method of semi-structured interviews, including the core questions and how I processed my data.

3.2 Social constructivism

Social constructivism is an epistemology, or theory of how knowledge is created, which observes different social constructs and how people build knowledge about themselves and the world in relation to those social constructs (Hirtle, 1996). Each person potentially has a multi-layered sense of who they are in relation to the different social constructs which exist within their environment, for instance, delineating their sex based on social constructs relating to gender norms. As this research engages deeply with underpinning gender and power constructs in Vanuatu in order to understand sex workers' experiences, it follows that social constructivism is the epistemology of this thesis.

Communication, or the written and spoken word, plays a significant role in the construction of knowledge. As language is seen as the “mobilization of knowledge”, when language is used it becomes a part of “collaborative thinking” and therefore mediates the meaning making processes of knowledge building (Hirtle, 1996, p. 91). Where there are particular patterns of language or words used in a social

environment, a specific knowledge becomes prevalent, and can be reproduced (and, therefore, reinforced) via continued use of certain words and phrases, thus influencing power dynamics in that social environment. However, certain recurrent phrases may also be resisted in various ways. People may, for example, directly challenge the use of particular ways of talking about something, or they may change the way they associate with particular words or phrases, for instance converting previously derogatory terms into expressions of empowerment.

3.3 Research methodologies: undertaking ethical research with sex workers in the South Pacific

Researching sex work can be complex, theoretically, ethically, and practically. Thus for guidance in deciding on which methods to use and to help me to think through the ethical challenges, I turned to those who had experience in the area of sex work research, as well as methodologies specific to undertaking research in the South Pacific region. Sex work research methodologies and the talanoa research methodology combined to inform my field research practice, which I will now discuss in turn.

For research methodologies specific to sex work research, a key source, offering important guidance and insight into ethical research in the field of sex work, is Dewey and Zheng's (2013) book *Ethical Research with Sex Workers: Anthropological Approaches*. Dewey and Zheng (2013) frame research with sex workers as an "ethnography of the particular" (p. 5), that is, engaging with sex workers' individual experiences within the particular sex industry in which they work. Wendy Chapkis' book, *Live Sex Acts: Women performing erotic labour* (1997) also offers important guidance for sex work research. Chapkis (1997) stresses the importance of listening for "meaning rather than just "fact"" (p. 212), which links to engaging with sex workers' subjective experiences, and avoiding essentialist framings. The social, political, and cultural context in which the research takes place, and the ways in which those structures may mediate the recollections of experiences sex workers choose to share, was also highlighted by Chapkis (1997). Furthermore, Chapkis (1997) looks at the position of the 'audience' or researcher in affecting what is observed, heard or spoken,

and succinctly points out the complex and ever-changing interplay between the cultural, the political, and the personal.

Researching with sex workers is evidently ethically contentious on several levels, as discussed further below. Dewey and Zheng (2013) note emotional stress as a key concern during interviews with sex workers. Not only could the researcher go into sensitive areas, but also the impact stigma has on sex workers' psychosocial wellbeing can be significant, including in relation to how individuals mentally and emotionally comprehend their experiences (Dewey & Zheng, 2013). A Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP) representative, cited in Dewey and Zheng (2013), explained that to deal with the above factors, the interviewer should abstain from asking sex workers directly about their experiences, thereby allowing the interviewee to decide how much they feel comfortable revealing.

Chapkis (1997) and Dewey and Zheng (2013) offer key insights into undertaking research with sex workers, including practical ways of ensuring interviews do not cause distress. Another key factor which is central to my research is the context in which it takes place. The talanoa research methodology encapsulates the unique experience of undertaking research in the South Pacific, and describes how interviews should be undertaken in a reciprocal, conversational, and relational way. The talanoa research methodology would in a Vanuatu context be more appropriately translated as *storian*, and has its methodological roots in Pacific Island oral tradition. Simply put, talanoa is "a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas, be it formal or informal" (Vaiotei, 2014, p. 192). Furthermore, talanoa maintains deep and empathetic ties to, and respect of, the participant's cultures, knowledge, values, languages, and processes or 'ways' which shapes the discussion.

The talanoa research methodology incorporates the idea of a relational research space, and the different dynamics which separate and connect the researcher and the research participants, taking into account gender, age, social status, and so on, within the "created cultural space" (Vaiotei, 2014, p. 196). The ways in which these characteristics establish points of convergence or divergence throughout the discussion is based on how the participants "interact with reference to their own realities, guided by their aspirations, rules and in their familiar cultural milieu."

(Vaiotei, 2014, p. 196). Talanoa also takes into account the more subtle, emotional, silent, physical aspects of culture, and, by extension, research. Practically speaking, this may involve metaphorical storytelling, discussing broader matters about family, faith, or anything from day-to-day activity, and allowing the conversation to be driven depending on the participants' answer to a question. In addition, talanoa emphasises the practice of reflexivity and positionality, as "the researcher is part of the participants' world, and therefore party to the description of any phenomenon under research" (Vaiotei, 2014, p. 207). Ultimately, talanoa entails a focus on the meaning-making processes of the participant, and the ways in which power is levelled out as the researcher engages with the emotional and spiritual world(s) of the participant (Vaiotei, 2014).

Specific methodologies related to sex work research are similar to the talanoa research methodology, especially regarding the conversational and reciprocal aspects of interviewing. This includes suggestions in Dewey and Zheng (2013) for researchers to outwardly acknowledge their own positionality, and share their own experiences. Chapkis (1997) also suggests the importance of acknowledging and reflecting on one's own inherent viewpoints and values, or biases. Thus, the attempt is made, through respect, empathy, reciprocity, and cultural awareness, for the interview to create a space for a more complex and equitable interviewee/interviewer interaction of exchanging of ideas and experiences. The above methodologies also offer guidance for producing research which respects human dignity and agency, and aims "to delineate an ethical, multifaceted, and multilayered picture of sex workers' lives lived in specific contexts, and bring to afore their hopes, fears, struggles, successes, and failures." (Dewey & Zheng, 2013, p. 25).

3.4 Ethics

This research gained approval from the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics committee, as well as a research permit from the Vanuatu Cultural Centre prior to its commencement. I have already outlined some of the ethical concerns involved in undertaking research with sex workers. Researchers working with sex workers also have a significant responsibility regarding the privacy of participants and the

confidential nature of any information provided, keeping in mind “that most sex workers only selectively disclose their income generating activities.” (Dewey & Zheng, 2013, p. 20). It is for the above reasons that pseudonyms are consistently used for participants; no identifying information has been revealed; participants were not asked to sign anything (they instead gave verbal consent); the locations of the interviews were private and out of ear shot of others; and only a selective few beyond the research participants knew of the specific nature of the research. I also explained what confidentiality entails to those participants who were not clear on its meaning.

Informed consent is clearly also crucial during research with any group, including sex workers. I considered consent as a dynamic and changing process throughout my research, thus the “boundary of the informed consent needs to be reevaluated and redefined.” (Dewey & Zheng, 2013, p. 30). Accordingly, after I had gained informed²⁸ verbal consent from participants, I often reminded them that they did not have to answer questions if they did not want to, and that they had control over what they wanted to say. Furthermore, if they wanted to stop the interview, or wished to withdraw from the study after the interview has finished, it was their right to do so.

It was agreed in my official ethics application that I would conduct the interviews in a private room at the Northern Care Youth Clinic (NCYC), in order to ensure confidentiality, and so that participants could come in to be interviewed under the guise of coming to access the clinic services. However, only three participants were interviewed in the clinic, with the others wanting to be interviewed elsewhere either for ease of access, or because they were embarrassed to enter the clinic (which is a sexual and reproductive health clinic). Elwood and Martin (2000) note that people can associate different places with different aspects of themselves or their roles.

Manderson, Bennett and Andajani-Sutjahjo (2006) also talk about how the interviewer/interviewee relationship denotes “social performances” or “enactments of self, social roles, and social characteristics” (p.1318) which are influenced by where the interview takes place. Thus, by allowing the interviewees to select where the interview

²⁸ See Appendix 1 and 2 for copies of the information sheets I went through with participants prior to interviews taking place.

would take place, they gain some authority over the space in which they would feel most comfortable discussing the aspects of their lives related to sex work.

Elwood and Martin (2000) state that “the interview site provides a material space for the enactment and constitution of power relations” (p. 650), thus it is important to consider here how the different interview sites influenced my encounters with research participants. The main place interviewees preferred to be interviewed was in kava bars, the interviewee and I would go to a private corner (which are easy to find in kava bars), and commence our discussion. Kava bars are an appropriate place to have discussions, or ‘*storian*,’ as drinking kava denotes intimacy and discussing aspects of life and culture, which links back to the talanoa research methodology. Kava bars, I should also note, are a modern development, where traditionally kava is reserved for men to drink in nakamals (meeting houses) during ceremonies. However, modern kava bars are social spaces where it is acceptable for women to drink kava, particularly in more urban centres. Additionally, kava bars are key sites for sex work, so are appropriate in terms of the participants relating to and communicating about that aspect of their lives, namely their involvement in sex work.

Other than kava bars, I also went to one interviewees’ place of work; I went to one’s home to speak to her as she had a new-born baby, and two participants’ relatives’ houses as they lived more rurally; and I spoke to a few in public spaces, where we found a tree to sit under, or a private space where we were out of earshot of other people. Elwood and Martin (2000) note how interviewing in participants’ homes can ease power inequalities, for the same reasons noted above, and I also found chatting outside in a private, neutral space was also inspiring of more relaxed and open conversations. On the other hand, interviewing in the NCYC clinic, while perhaps outwardly more ‘neutral’ and private, had more of a formal, or clinical feel, thus less relational.

Part of conducting ethical research, as the methodologies discussed above note, means being reflexive and being aware of one’s positionality throughout the research and writing process, which I will now discuss.

3.5 My Positionality: being a ‘waet missis’

Undertaking research denotes complex relations of power related to fixed aspects of identity, such as age and race, and also the aspects which may be negotiated or renegotiated during interactions between interviewers and interviewees (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006). Reflecting on one's position as researcher is important for actively minimising behaviour that might create or foster inequalities or feelings of powerlessness amongst those being interviewed (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006).

Figure 4: Researcher giving condom demonstration at a youth workshop, Northern Care Youth Centre (Personal photo, 2015)

Figure 5: Researcher facilitating youth workshop for young men, Northern Care Youth Centre (Personal photo, 2015)

I am a tall, slim, Caucasian 24-year-old woman with light brown hair (see Figures 4 & 5 above). My physical appearance is important to note as it carries certain stereotypes amongst ni-Vanuatu that I am wealthy, consider myself 'civilised', and am potentially sexually promiscuous²⁹. However, when I arrived in Vanuatu to conduct my field research, I spent a week in Port Vila with the Wan Smolbag³⁰ Peer Educators in order to gain their advice based on past sex worker projects they had been involved with. The key point they revealed to me was that being an outsider when discussing taboo matters such as sex work could have its advantages due to the fact I have no kinship

²⁹ These stereotypes I mostly know from my experience living in Luganville, especially when I first arrived in the town, and from numerous conversations with ni-Vanuatu colleagues and friends. These stereotypes, especially the association of white women being sexually promiscuous, are also explained in Cummings (2008), particularly relating to the way white women dress (for example tight trousers and short skirts). Jolly (1994) gives a historical account of the link between 'whiteness' and prostitution in explaining how the indigenous men of South Pentecost barred their women from leaving for work on plantations, and even from learning Bislama, for fear that they will be influenced by foreign ways and become prostitutes.

³⁰ Wan Smolbag is a local non-government organisation of which NCYC is a part.

ties, thus the risks of gossip or social stigma would be seen to be lower. Furthermore, being associated with 'foreign ways' could mean that I am seen to be less judgemental around issues of sexuality, and could foster curiosity about where I am from, which could help to build rapport (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006). This point adds to the complexity of my positionality, though it does not necessarily eliminate the divide between ni-Vanuatu and Caucasian ex-patriates which is perceived by many ni-Vanuatu, and which has historical ties to colonisation. However, as I had spent quite a bit of time in the community, could speak Bislama, and had already formed some strong relationships, this softened some of those barriers.

I initially came to Luganville, Santo, as a volunteer with Volunteer Services Abroad (VSA) in February 2015. I volunteered for over a year with the peer education team at the Northern Care Youth Centre/Clinic (NCYC). The peer education team delivers awareness programmes to community groups and schools on sexual and reproductive health, and I was very active in starting new programmes and service delivery methods (see Figures 4 & 5, p. 55). My work and training as part of this role gave me a good understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including specific symptoms of STIs, STI/HIV transmission, and how different STIs/HIV impact the body. I also facilitated many workshops on sexual consent and healthy relationships. I spoke to hundreds of community members and school students throughout my time with NCYC, and also became well known for singing in the Youth Centre's band. During my volunteer placement, I was always mindful of appropriate behaviour and dress, which is important in terms of peoples' attitudes and perceptions of me as an outsider (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006).

My personal relationships, which are still ongoing, taught me a lot about ni-Vanuatus' relationship to *kastom*, and I became not only familiar with, but also practically followed some of the behavioural *kastom* of the East Coast of Santo, as well as learning some of the area's indigenous language, Wanohe. My social life during my volunteer placement often revolved around kava bars, which meant sitting for hours in the evening to *storian* with people. Additionally, I have many ni-Vanuatu *sista*, and had

many conversations with these friends about their lives, and relationships³¹. However, I respectfully acknowledge that my understanding of ni-Vanuatu women's experiences, including in relation to intimate partner violence which I have some personal experience of, will only ever be partial. This partial understanding is due to the difference between conceptually 'knowing' something, and actually experiencing the realities of certain types of oppression, within particular contexts.

Overall, my ability to speak Bislama fluently, and my connections and history in Luganville enabled me to gain more trust and rapport than might otherwise be afforded to a white woman. Several times participants confided in me about more personal aspects of their lives and relationships, and sought my advice on how to handle some of these challenges. I distinctly remember several of the female participants discussing difficulties and abuse they were experiencing with their partners or boyfriends. One woman also sought my advice on what to do about some STI symptoms she was experiencing, and I accompanied one male sex worker to the NCYC clinic to meet the nurse and take a blood test. I also regularly experienced the female participants referring to our common womanhood, for example the burden of being child bearers, and often using inclusive pronouns, i.e. "Yumi ol woman..." which translates as "Us women..." While such connections enabled a greater sense of intimacy and increased sharing, I was careful in my interviews to make sure the interviewees knew that these conversations were part of my Masters research. Accordingly, while I did run into participants after I had interviewed them, we did little more than acknowledge each other, occasionally stopping for a quick chat, but any issues mentioned in the context of the interview were not brought up again.

My interactions with the male non-sex worker participants, namely the 'middle men', the client, and the ex-boyfriend of a sex worker, were perhaps the most complex in terms of my positionality. Being a woman and speaking about sexual matters with men is often considered taboo, however, my status associated with being white and educated would have also influenced the interactions. This was most apparent when

³¹ While I did form many close relationships during my time in Luganville, which has influenced my understanding of relationships and intimate partner violence in Vanuatu, I have endeavoured to keep my discussions and analysis in this thesis focussed on the findings of my field research.

these male participants caught themselves swearing or saying something explicit, and, as if suddenly remembering that I was a woman, apologised to me. However, I consistently encouraged an open dialogue, though my outward confidence did not mean I did not have moments of feeling uncomfortable. Beyond feeling at times a sense of vulnerability, I never felt threatened by any participant, in fact post-interviews I often experienced a level of protectiveness, particularly by the male non-sex worker participants, for example one walked with me to ensure I safely found a taxi.

3.6 Research methods

Above I discussed the talanoa and sex work research methodologies which informed my research practice. Both of these methodologies suggest relational, culturally and socially aware, and open dialogues between interviewers and interviewees. The qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews allows for reciprocal, emotional, and open dialogues, which embody the methodologies discussed above.

Qualitative research “...starts from the notion of the social construction of realities under study, [and] is interested in the perspectives of participants, in everyday practices and everyday knowledge referring to the issue under study.” (Flick, 2007, p. 2). Additionally, having semi-structured interviews as my core qualitative research method allowed for the conversational, relational, open, and empathetic type of interviews advised by the talanoa and sex work methodologies. Semi-structured interviews can be “conversational and informal in tone” while still having core questions in order to grasp “descriptive, thoughtful or emotional” information about particular experiences (Longhurst, 2003, p. 119-121). Also, while I mostly spoke to sex workers, I also spoke to people who are involved in, or have knowledge of the sex industry, following the advice given by Dewey and Zheng (2013), who state:

...to enhance the reliability of the data, I recommend that sex work researchers corroborate stories told by sex workers with information provided by their partners, family members, clients, and establishment managers and workers.
(p. 32)

The method of semi-structured interviews was supported by the manager of the WSB Peer Education programme, who had experience in the previous research projects on

sex work in Port Vila. When I met with her she said one of the shortfalls of the past research projects was that a lot of what came out of those projects were numbers, but the actual stories; the reasons why people get involved in sex work, and the details of sex workers' interactions, were not explored in depth.

I had thought, initially, that recruitment of research participants may be challenging, and sex workers may be reluctant to talk with me due to the taboo nature of their work. However, I was surprised by how supportive people were in assisting with recruitment, and the openness of participants themselves. There were six people who helped me with recruiting participants: one peer educator from WSB in Port Vila, three peer educators from NCYC in Luganville, one youth worker, and a 'middle man' who I initially met via the youth worker, and interviewed, before he went on to assist me with recruiting some of the female sex workers he knew. Recruitment happened by one of the six people listed above contacting some of their friends and explaining who I was, and what my research was about, including some of the questions that would be asked. Those who agreed to be interviewed then stated where they wanted to be interviewed and a time that suited them, and the interview went ahead. Those who did not want to be interviewed, or who initially wanted to, but later declined, were not pursued any further, their decision being entirely respected.

All participants agreed for the interviews to be recorded on a Dictaphone, except for two. With the two participants who did not want to be recorded, I instead wrote notes about the discussion after the interview had finished. While my questions, and the order in which I asked them, varied, there were some core themes which I covered during interviews. Following the advice noted above by the SWOP representative, I always asked questions in general terms, so that the interviewee could choose the extent to which they wanted to draw on their own experiences. An example of how I framed questions is, instead of asking "How did you begin as a sex worker?" I would ask "How do people initially get involved in sex work?"

Figure 6: Summary of the people who participated in this research:

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Who they are</i>	<i>Location</i>
<i>Angela</i>	33	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Anne</i>	37	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Christine</i>	28	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Daisy</i>	24	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Felicity</i>	28	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Ingrid</i>	42	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Kathy</i>	37	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Maggie</i>	37	Female sex worker	Relative's house
<i>Jenny</i>	40	Female sex worker	Relative's house
<i>Mary</i>	17	Female sex worker	Near a beach
<i>Rachel</i>	30	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Amy</i>	28	Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Rose</i>	28	Female sex worker	NCYC Clinic
<i>Sarah</i>	23	Female sex worker	Her house
<i>Susan</i>	20	Female sex worker	NCYC Clinic
<i>Caitlin</i>	38	Ex-Female sex worker	Kava bar
<i>Jack</i>	23	Male sex worker	Near his place of work
<i>James</i>	25	Male sex worker	NCYC Clinic
<i>Michael</i>	17	Male sex worker	Local park
<i>Freddie</i>	24	Middle man	Kava bar
<i>John</i>	34	Middle man	Kava bar
<i>Jeremy</i>	29	Middle man	Kava bar
<i>Andrew</i>	27	Client	Kava bar
<i>Tim</i>	24	Ex-boyfriend of sex worker	Kava bar

The key themes that I covered were:

1. Entrance into sex work
2. What and how much is given in exchange for sex
3. The kind of people that pay for sex
4. Condom use
5. Awareness of STIs/HIV and treatment seeking behaviour
6. Awareness and use of family planning methods
7. Risks and challenges faced by sex workers

3.7 Limitations

This research, as with any, has its limitations. The key limitations which I would note are the small number of male sex workers (i.e. three), and male non-sex workers, for instance clients (i.e. one) and ‘middle men’ (i.e. three) who were involved in the study. Nurses, doctors, and health workers were also not interviewed as part of this research, which is a clear limitation. However, the greater proportion of female sex workers in this study lends itself to this thesis’ overall objectives, namely to understand *sex workers’* experiences of, and limits to claiming their SRHR. The shortage of male sex workers in this research, therefore, is perhaps the most significant limitation³².

3.8 Processing the data

Aside from the two participants who did not want to be recorded, every recorded interview was transcribed in Bislama, then coded using NVivo. The notes from the interviews which were not recorded were also typed up on Microsoft Word, and then coded using NVivo. Coding is a way of dividing the information gathered during interviews into certain themes or categories in order to write ‘analytic summaries’ of each of the categories which in turn “provide the basis for the overall project analysis and interpretation.” (Schensul, 2012, p. 99). The categories I divided my data into were:

- Clients – the type of person who pays for sex
- Condoms – use, or non-use, and attitudes
- Entrance into sex work
- Family planning, with a sub-category of pregnancy and parenting
- Family, community, and *kastom*
- Island life versus town
- Money and sex – attitudes towards income generation via sex work, and use of money
- Relationships – past or current relationships, i.e. distinct from client/sex worker relations
- Risks/challenges involved in sex work
- Sexual transaction – how sex work happens in Luganville, with a sub-category of ‘middle men’

³² There were five more male sex workers, who were part of the same social group, who initially agreed to be interviewed, before collectively pulling out.

- Sexuality – attitudes and stigma towards sexual minorities
- STIs, HIV/AIDS, and seeking treatment – knowledge about STIs and HIV/AIDS; perceptions of risk; signs and symptoms; treatment seeking behaviour/barriers.

3.9 Summary

This thesis' epistemology is social constructivism, observing how knowledge is produced via various social constructs which operate in peoples' lives. The methodologies which have informed this research are those specific to sex work research, and the talanoa research methodology which is relevant to undertaking research in the South Pacific. These methodologies provide general guidance around producing relational, open spaces which respect the social and cultural identities and 'ways' of the interviewee.

Research on sex work is ethically contentious, and informed consent and confidentiality are crucial principles to abide by. Thus, I allowed space for interviewees to respond to the extent to which they felt comfortable by asking questions in general terms, and observed consent as an ongoing process which involves reminding people of their rights.

Though aspects of my intended research process changed (e.g. changed location for interviews), I made such decisions based on ethical principles of non-harm and respect for the wishes of participants. I also discussed above my multifaceted positionality, before stating the specific ways in which I went about my research by conducting semi-structured interviews in locations chosen by participants. Below I begin a discussion of my research findings.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the key findings of my research on ni-Vanuatu sex workers' experiences of and limits to claiming their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) in Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu. The research findings have been divided into eleven categories, or sections. The first four categories relate to the technicalities of the sex industry in Luganville, with the subheadings of: entrance into sex work; the sexual transaction; 'middle men'; and clients. The next four categories, which relate to SRHR, are: condom use; STIs, HIV/AIDS, and treatment seeking behaviour; family planning, pregnancy, and parenting; and violations of human rights, and other risks faced by sex workers in Luganville. The final three sections relate to factors surrounding sex work in Luganville: sex and money, life in town, and *kastom*; sexuality; and relationships.

Discussions for each of the three key themes begin with a brief description of the information included under that heading, before summarising what research participants said in relation to each category within the given theme. Every quote has been translated by myself from Bislama, and I have elaborated via footnotes where necessary on some of the terminology which was not able to be directly translated. None of the participants' real names have been used, but I have included their age, and whether they are a female sex worker (FSW), an ex-FSW, a male sex worker (MSW), or a 'middle man'. For the ex-boyfriend of a sex worker, and the client, I have simply stated their role.

It is important to note here that, while I use the terms 'sex work' and 'sex workers', interviewees did not use this terminology, nor did they self-identify as 'sex workers'. Rather, interviewees often alluded to the exchange of money/goods for sexual acts, for instance, 'mekem kaen ia' ('do this kind of thing'), or described the exchange through slang or euphemism, though often also explicitly (see also McMillan & Worth, 2011a; Servy, 2014).

4.2 The technicalities of Luganville's sex work industry

As this was the first piece of research to be conducted on sex work in Luganville, a significant finding was uncovering the technicalities of the sex industry in Luganville. It is important to understand both the extent of sex work and the mechanics of the transactions involved in order to assess risks to the SRHR of workers in Luganville. This section will cover how people start selling sex, the sexual transaction (including what and how much is exchanged, and where it takes place), the role of 'middle men', and clients of sex workers. This section will provide a picture of the inner workings of the sex industry in Luganville, revealing also what appears to be an extensive underground network in the township.

4.2.1 Entrance into sex work

Because life is hard. In order to buy a shell of kava, or food for the house – they can't afford it. The next option, if they don't have a job, the next option is you must sell yourself. That's it. You must make a bit of money out of your body so that you can afford what you want. 'John' (middle man, 34 years)

This category concerns how and why sex workers begin selling sex, and the above quote from 'John' is revealing of some of the key factors which lead people into sex work. This research identified four main reasons as to why people begin earning money via sexual activity: marriage or relationship breakdown; lack of employment/adequate income, and/or financial support from spouses; lack of parental support; and participation in social life. The ways in which people enter into sex work were found to be via friends or family; via men requesting sex in exchange for money or other goods; and via middle men, which will be discussed in greater depth below in a separate category. Pornography will also briefly be discussed.

Marriage and relationship breakdown

One of the key reasons noted by participants as to why people decide to engage in sex work, particularly for older FSW (i.e. late 20s – 40 years), is due to their husbands leaving them and their children, usually for other women. As a result, these women are left as the sole providers for their children, and as employment is hard to come by,

and even when it is, wages are often insufficient to cover expenses, sex work becomes a feasible way to make money. 'Ingrid' (FSM, 42 years), for example, began as a sex worker when her husband left her and their eight children for another woman. She works during the day, but it is not enough to pay for everything her and her children need, so sex work is a way for her to supplement her income.

Relationship breakdown in general seemed to be a common theme prior to the decision to start selling sex. 'Anne' (FSM, 37 years), for example, after having a child to a very controlling man at the age of 16, managed to escape the relationship, and ended up in Luganville where sex work became both a bit of fun, and a way to make money.

Experiences of disappointing relationships on were also noted by several participants, both sex workers and middle men, as a motivation to start selling sex. 'Freddie' (middle man, 24 years), for example, spoke of a close friend of his who began as a sex worker after she found out her fiancé was cheating on her. The issue of relationships will be discussed further below.

The issue of money

Many of the female sex worker participants were married, and one of their key reasons for engaging in sex work was their husband's inability to financially provide for them and their children. As 'Maggie' (FSM, 37) stated:

I think that sometimes you're stuck at your husband's home, and you find it hard to get enough money, then you see a friend of yours [earning money via sex work], then you think – 'Perhaps I can also try this kind of behaviour, then I'll make money – I can pay for sugar, pay for food for us, soap...'

'John' (middle man, 34 years) also noted that many of his contacts (i.e. sex workers) are married, but as their husbands did not work, they started selling sexual services. He said that some husbands even agreed for their wives to do so, if not encouraged them, "because the husband isn't employed; the wife isn't employed, so the husband must agree for his wife to make this work – use her body to make money, income." Another participant, 'Anne' (FSM, 37 years), told me about how her husband used to have a job, which meant that she could 'cut down' on how many clients she saw,

though now she is back to being the sole breadwinner. When I asked her why her husband no longer works, she said: “Because my husband is too lazy to find work.” However, she has seven children, so having both her and her husband out of work is not an option.

Lack of parental support

Several participants noted that for young women, including school students, who engage in sex work, it is often due to lack of financial support from their parents. ‘Caitlin’ (ex-FSW, 38 years) spoke about a 15-year-old friend of hers, let’s call her ‘Ella’, whose parents are separated, and whose mother is often unable to financially support her. Thus, sex work has become a way for ‘Ella’ to earn money where she cannot gain financial support via alternative means. ‘Caitlin’ also mentioned that ‘Ella’ is a rape survivor, and that she sees this incident as a more personal rationale for her involvement in sex work.

In most cases that were mentioned of school students engaging in sex work, their parents were not aware, mostly due to the fact that they lived on another island, and had sent their children to school in Luganville. The reasons that were stated by participants as to why younger people are now engaging in sex work were mostly associated with a desire to participate in social life, which will be elaborated on below.

‘Ingrid’ (FSM, 42 years) was the only participant in this research who also employed her daughters in sex work, as she was struggling financially to such an extent that she could see no other option other than for her daughters to also earn money via sex work. As will be discussed below, in Luganville family members and peers often recruit others into sex work, so ‘Ingrid’s’ case is not necessarily unique.

All three of the middle men I spoke to also held the perception that some younger girls are simply more sexually curious and promiscuous, and they begin earning money from sex simply as a pastime, and a way to get some pocket money. This perception of young people starting out as sex workers as just a bit of fun, or “like a game” (‘Anne’, FSW, 37 years), was also shared by some of the sex workers I spoke to. Young people’s involvement in the sex industry, therefore, may begin as a way to earn some pocket

money where parents are unable to provide any, as well as something for their amusement.

Participation in social life

As suggested above, a rationale behind a lot of younger people engaging in sex work seemed to be due to a desire to participate in, and be able to afford the social life of town. This factor also denotes the social element of sex work, where people may be introduced to sex work via peer networks. Several sex workers I spoke to mentioned that sex workers often learnt from friends that sex work is a relatively easy way to get what they wanted. 'Susan' (FSM, 20 years), for example, points out that one can "...approach the men you know have money, ask them for money, but the reward for the money they give you – sex." So, while money and other goods may be requested, the outcome, namely sex, is also clearly assumed. Several other participants also pointed out that receiving money, or drinking kava or alcohol implies having sex as a method of repayment.

Older sex workers (late 20s to 40s) also cited participation in social life, for instance drinking kava, as a motivator for engaging in sex work. Although, as older sex workers often have children, their reasons also tend to include buying household essentials, and paying for rent.

Soliciting by clients

In some cases, men also approached women, usually via a middle man (discussed below), requesting that they have sex with them in exchange for money, or other goods, mostly kava or alcohol. Furthermore, men may offer money as a way to convince women to sleep with them, essentially like a bribe. As 'Angela' (FSM, 33 years), for example, explained: "Men always trick women – 'You should come, then I'll give you money' – you know? Then, this kind of thing, they go and sleep with the man." Other sex workers also spoke about how their first experiences of sex work were instances where money was used as a way to 'convince' them to have sex. For women who do not have a job, but who also require money for their various wants and needs, this prospect is accepted on the basis that there will be financial reward.

Male sex workers also noted being propositioned by other men who would offer mostly kava or alcohol, and occasionally money, in exchange for sex as the way they began engaging in sex work, as well as men asking for their cell phone numbers. However, this propositioning process appeared to be more direct than with women, who were more often initially approached by a middle man.

Pornography

Access to pornography was also stated by several participants as increasingly a driving force behind sex work. As ‘Susan’ (FSM, 20 years) points out: “Sometimes they learn – they all watch those boys’ DVDs a lot, those pornographic DVDs that are being released. When they see [pornography], it’s like a carnival, they’re on!” ‘Susan’ notes that pornography is increasingly influencing sexual relations in Luganville, however, pornography is not only a way to learn about sex, but also about how things are done in other parts of the world:

Because we watch too much pornography, magazines – like, we adopt the foreign attitudes, and live the life of a foreigner. Like, we look, and we think we can do it. Because this thing, porno, in France – normal. It happens in every part of the world. ‘John’ (middle man, 37 years)

Pornography, then, can be seen as a kind of stimulus for being sexually experimental, and to ‘live the life of a foreigner’. While there is not a direct co-relation between watching pornography and engaging in sex work, it perhaps provides some form of social incentive or justification.

4.2.2 The sexual transaction

This category of the technicalities of sex work in Luganville concerns what sexual transactions between sex workers and their clients look like, from the initiation of the deal, to the transaction itself, and what and how much is exchanged for sex. This section will clarify what life is like on a day-to-day basis as a Luganville-based ni-Vanuatu sex worker. This section is important for developing an understanding of the workings of Luganville’s sex industry, especially in relation to vulnerabilities

experienced by sex workers, and the extent to which they can comprehend and exercise their rights.

How the transaction is initiated

This research identified four main ways the transaction is initiated: a sex worker is approached by a client; a sex worker approaches a client, or a man observed to have money to spare; via cell phone; and via middle men. The role middle men play in the transaction will be discussed separately in Section 4.2.3.

Sex workers will usually initiate a transaction in situations where they want something, but do not have the money to pay for it. Kava drinking was an example commonly given as to why sex workers initiated a transaction, where they would go and hang out in nakamals³³, or kava bars, and ask men to buy them kava. This situation may also bring about regular cliental, as ‘Sarah’ (23 years) points out:

There’s the kind of thing where we sit down at a nakamal to drink kava, but if you see a man come and buy lots of kava, then you say, ‘Hey, that guy’s got money, let’s try and *pinim nek blo hem*’³⁴ [laughs]. It’s like that. Sometimes... yes, lots of times at the nakamal. But once a man meets you at a nakamal, and he knows your number, you’ll just start receiving lots of calls from those men who want to give you money, that kind of thing.

Often, however, the fact that the purchasing of kava (or, in other cases, alcohol or accepting money) implies sexual intercourse is not explicitly discussed, but rather an assumed fact. ‘Michael’ (MSW, 17 years), for example, refers to the exchange of alcohol for sex as “the system of the [night] club”, referring to the new night club in Luganville, Planet 107³⁵.

³³ The word ‘nakamal’ traditionally refers to Vanuatu meeting houses, where (male only) kava ceremonies would be held to mark certain events. Now ‘nakamal’ also often denotes kava bars which have emerged as a part of the social life in towns and some villages, and where it is acceptable for women to drink kava.

³⁴ ‘*pinim nek*’ or ‘*pinim nek blo hem*’ is slang for soliciting money off someone, usually as part of sex work.

³⁵ Planet 107 is a nightclub on the outskirts of Luganville. It opened in 2015, so at the time of this research it was still a new development.

Just as sex is expected in return for giving money or paying for other goods for someone, the handing over of money also may be a presumed end of sexual intercourse. 'Anne' specifically stated that she never asks for money, rather the man will just give her money as perhaps an assumed 'reward' for sexual intercourse: "I don't ask them [the clients]. When they've done it with me, they just give [money] to me."

Pornography and the internet were also mentioned by a couple of participants as a way sex workers may initiate future transactions. 'Tim' (ex-boyfriend of a sex worker, 24 years) spoke about how he discovered his ex-girlfriend's pornographic movie, before describing how making, or being part of a porno, is a way for sex workers to earn more money, and gain more clients: "[Pornos are made] as a way to publish themselves. Their pornos come out, they are the masters of the Whitehouse³⁶."

'Tim' also spoke about how his ex-girlfriend's pornographic film was also sold outside of Vanuatu on DVD and on the internet, so men now travel to Luganville specifically to pay for sex from her. Pornography, including 'homemade' clips, are also shared locally on cell phones via Bluetooth. One of the 'middle men' mentioned that he had taken videos on his phone of sex work being undertaken in public spaces, though he also said that these videos were not to share, but rather to teach the sex worker a lesson that she should go somewhere more private.

The internet more generally may also be a place where future transactions may be instigated, including with foreign clients. 'Anne' (FSW, 37 years), for example, discussed her experience of being published online by clients, mostly expatriates, apparently without her knowledge. So, the sexual transaction may be proposed by a sex worker, or by a client, with the internet and locally made pornographic films as a way to initiate further transactions.

The sexual transaction

³⁶ 'Whitehouse' is slang for prostitution, sometimes referring to a brothel, but here referring to sex work in general.

This section will provide an overview of the transaction itself, including what usually happens during interactions with clients, and where sexual intercourse takes place.

Most participants noted that oral sex was commonly performed prior to vaginal or anal sex, although oral sex may also be a substitute for when sex workers do not want to have penetrative sex, or cannot, namely when a female sex worker is menstruating. As 'Mary' (FSW, 17 years) notes, in these situations "you must do something; us women we must do something so he can feel good. The main thing now, blow job." This quote again reveals the power associated with giving or spending money on someone, and the expectation that something will be given in return.

'Andrew' (client, 27 years) mentioned during our discussion that oral sex is sometimes preferred by clients over vaginal sex, which 'John' ('middle man', 34 years) also noted. Oral sex was also usually both given and received by clients which is an interesting point to note when considering the pleasure sex workers may also derive from their work.

Concerning where the sexual transaction takes place, three main places were mentioned: the bush, the beach, and motels. While motels are used by clients who have money, or who are visiting Luganville so are already staying in a motel, bush areas and the beach are more commonly used as they are free, and easy to access for quick transactions. 'Mary' provides a run down on how a transaction may look on any given night:

Like, example: suppose we want to drink [alcohol], but we don't have money. Then I say that I have a friend who would be able to give some money for us to buy alcohol. OK, I ring him, then he will say, 'You want some money? I have some money here. But if you want money, you come and see me first.' Jump in a taxi, go anywhere – the bush on the side of the road, you know? Any place where no one can see the two of you. Then, once the sex is finished, you get the money for alcohol, you come back – you can go and drink now at Planet [107], enjoy yourself.

Motels (sometimes also referred to as guest houses), as mentioned, are for wealthier and higher status clients, and transactions which happen in motels seem to mostly be

those which involve a middle man. There is no specific motel which is used, and clients will either pay for a room for the night, or just for a few hours.

The male sex workers also noted some other places where they go to have sex, for example in bathrooms, or staff rooms in nightclubs. Motels were not mentioned by any of the MSW I interviewed as a place where they go to meet clients. I hypothesise that this is due to stigma over their sexuality, and also the fact that the middle men I spoke to only had the contact numbers of FSW. The MSW I spoke to may have 'messengers' who approach them and inform them that a guy wants to buy them a drink, but the middle men who I spoke to, who often deal with clients of a higher status, did not mention any MSW.

Finally, 'Andrew' (client, 27 years), who works on a domestic shipping vessel, also spoke about sex workers coming on board the ship when they come to shore, not just in Santo, but in other islands as well. He said that there were about six sex workers from Luganville who regularly come on board the ship he works on.

What and how much is exchanged

As has already been discussed above, money, alcohol, and kava are the main items used to pay for sex. Cigarettes also are often bought alongside kava and alcohol, and alcohol or kava may be bought as well as money given. In terms of how much money, kava, or alcohol is given in exchange for sex, accounts vary based on whether the client, the middle man, or the sex worker decides. The majority of the time, however, it ultimately comes down to how much money the client has, as preference is given to the transaction actually taking place:

Me: Is there a certain amount men pay?

John: 2000, 3000 to 5000 [vatu]. Really, it starts at 500 vatu, up. It depends on how much money the client has – how much money he proposes will be the amount paid.

'John's' (middle man, 34 years) summary is consistent with other participants'.

However, the amount of money that may be given in instances where the client is wealthy may increase to around 20 – 50 thousand vatu (NZ\$251.28 - \$628.20), including one instance which was reported of 'Tim's' ex-girlfriend, a well-known local

sex worker, receiving 1 million vatu (NZ\$12,561.82) for her involvement in a pornographic film.

On the other hand, if the client does not have much money, he may just pay for kava, with the possible addition of 500 – 1000 vatu (NZ\$6.28 - \$12.56). ‘Ingrid’ (42 years) was the only participant in this research who had a fixed price of 3000 vatu (NZ\$37.69) per client. Interestingly, ‘Maggie’ (FSW, 37 years) also mentioned how, when asking a price, keeping it low may be a ploy to attract more clients: “Sometimes, like, so I can attract customers, plenty of men, I play at a cheap price. So, I say, ‘500vt’.”

Money is also often given after sex. ‘Ingrid’ (FSW, 42 years) was the only participant who insisted on being paid prior to having sex, usually arranged by her middle man. Where money is paid after sex, however, the deal for sex workers may be compromised as there is a risk that the client will then refuse to pay, or pay less than the amount initially agreed upon.

Regarding payments of goods other than money, for instance kava and alcohol, these seem to be given first, then sexual intercourse will follow once the client and the sex worker have had enough to drink. The male sex workers I interviewed mostly spoke about kava and alcohol being exchanged for sexual services, though sometimes money was also given, for example, where they had expressed a specific need to the client such as needing money to buy lunch.

Refusing a client

The majority of participants said that, if they did not want to go out with a client, they could say no on the premise that the client would simply go and find another person to have sex with. However, there can be risks involved in refusing, including clients forcing the transaction, and an inability to back out of a transaction once money/kava/alcohol has been given. In general, though, the view was, where the sex worker from the outset did not want to engage with a client, there would be someone else to take their place. The sex worker could recommend a friend, or the client or middle man would find someone else.

However, several participants also spoke about the financial incentive, which may also exist alongside pressure from clients, as ‘Christine’ (FSW, 28 years) explains:

Me: But if a guy comes [to pay for sex], and she doesn't want to, then...?

Christine: Then she doesn't want to. But if the man is persistent, then he will continue to try and go with her, then she will accept. Like, he will ask, then the woman will accept, perhaps he has money – if so, he will say, 'If you do this [have sex], I will give this [money] to you.' The woman, like, she'll accept because of the money."

Harassment by clients was noted by other sex workers in this research, even where it was apparent they did not want to engage in a transaction, for example by changing sim cards so that clients could no longer contact them. There were also instances where sex workers assumed responsibility for men's lack of control over their sexual urges. 'Anne' (FSW, 37 years), for example, spoke several times about how she "ruin[s] their thoughts", or "make[s] them crazy". This innate sense of responsibility will be discussed further in the following chapter.

4.2.3 Middle men

Middle men play a significant role in sexual transactions in Luganville. Middle men are so called because they are the link between clients and sex workers. There is a hierarchy of middle men in Luganville. At the lower level are younger men, often friends or family members of sex workers, who are sent on behalf of clients, and who are not paid. At the middle level are young guys who act as 'runners' for higher status middle men, and who received payment of some sort. Local taxi and bus drivers seemed to be slightly higher in status than 'runners', and may initiate a transaction themselves, or provide transportation at the request of other middle men. Finally, there are the higher level middle men, who often deal with higher status cliental, such as politicians or business men. The three middle men I spoke to were of the fourth, higher status rank. They take a cut of the money given by the client, as well as arrange clients for sex workers, and have some level of control over the sexual transaction. However, the former three types of middle men were also discussed by the participants in this research. I will discuss first what this research found about how middle men enter into the sex industry and recruit sex workers into their network, before considering each type of middle man listed above.

Starting out as middle men

Just as many young sex workers started when they were school students, the middle men I spoke to also began in the sex work industry when they were still at school. According to the middle men I spoke to, they learnt about being a middle man when older boys sent them to ask out girls in their class.

Perhaps this is an indication that sex work in the context of Luganville (and potentially Vanuatu in general) is an extension, yet also a distortion of the norms of courtship, which will be analysed further in the following chapter. The ways in which the middle men I spoke to started out reflects the experiences of other young men who are 'sent' to proposition their female acquaintances on behalf of other men, or who middle men employ to run errands for them. Thus, even though the middle men I spoke to have now moved further up in the ranks, considering whether they began is significant when analysing the sex industry in Luganville, and hypothesising about its future.

Recruiting sex workers

The middle men I interviewed also spoke about how they recruit potential sex workers. All of them began the process of establishing contacts with sex workers when they were at school, observing the economic potential in their friendships with female classmates, especially those who "like to fuck" ('Freddie', middle man, 24 years). However, kava bars, were also noted by middle men as social spaces where they could initiate discussions with women about the prospect of sex work as a way to earn an income. Likewise, women wanting to make money via sex work may also sit down in kava bars and speak to established middle men about going out with some of their male 'customers'.

The role of friends and family members

Sometimes they [clients] see us, they can't come directly, but maybe they know a friend of theirs [the sex worker], or a family member, so they [the client] will just talk with them – a family member, a brother, so that they can go and speak with the girl. – 'Felicity' FSW, 28 years

As 'Felicity' points out, speaking to a woman directly regarding initiating a sexual transaction is not a common practice, unless perhaps the sex worker and the client have a long-standing agreement, and/or arrangements are made via cell phone. Perhaps the easiest way for clients to make a connection with a sex worker is via younger, often male family members, or friends of the sex worker.

As mentioned above, the middle men I spoke to also stated that they started as middle men in a similar way, namely as young boys who were sent by other, often older males, to speak to girls on their behalf, so this is not an uncommon practice.

'Runners'

'Runners' refers to another role often taken up by young men in the sex business of Luganville. I have called them 'runners' as they are hired to run errands for other, more established middle men. 'Freddie' (middle man, 24 years) went into the most detail about the role of 'runners', although they were also mentioned by the other two middle men I interviewed. Below is 'Freddie's' explanation of the role these young men play in the transaction:

Freddie: Sometimes I'm around, but if I'm not present at the time, there'll be another one of my boys who'll be around.

Me: So, you and your brother have some boys as well?

Freddie: Yes, my brother and I, we've got some boys. If a client comes and requests a woman, if we're too busy, the two of us send one [boy] to go and arrange [the transaction] with the woman. But if our boys aren't around, we will just go. They are all young guys; we can't deal with older men, only young guys – they're easier for us to control.

Me: How old are they?

Freddie: Like, 18 to 25.

Me: Do they also get commission?

Freddie: Their commission, we re-pay them in a different way... they don't receive a cut out of the money we get – that is for us. But there are ways we can compensate them for their work. Like, we'll give him a small packet of marijuana, and he'll feel that's sufficient. Most of them really like smoking

weed, so when they want to smoke weed, then, OK, give them some weed, 'Go and find...' like this. But some, if they don't smoke weed, we'll give them kava if some has been prepared, or 1000 vatu, enough.

In considering the role young men play in the transaction, a more multifaceted picture of the sex industry in Luganville begins to be established. In addition to being friends and family members of sex workers, young men also become part of the sexual transaction through their links with more established middle men. 'Freddie' also spoke about his younger life as being comparable to 'his boys' who he now employs as a more established middle man, and how this kind of business starts "out of the struggles of the youths of the street".

Ultimately, where young, often unemployed men realise that they may receive something in exchange either for their connections with other young women in their area (or class at school), or older middle men, this provides the incentive for their involvement in the sex work industry.

Taxi/bus drivers

Taxi drivers, and bus drivers to a lesser extent, play a significant role in the networks involved in the sex industry in Luganville. Taxi drivers are often hired by middle men to provide transportation for a sex worker to meet a client. However, taxi drivers may also be the first point of contact for men seeking a sexual transaction, who would then usually contact a middle man in the area they are driving in.

Taxi drivers are a key part of the network as they are servicing multiple potential clients, and, as noted during interviews, the privacy of a taxi gives men an opportunity to express their desires. Once the middle man has been contacted, it was explained to me, he will arrange for a pick-up place for the sex worker, and the taxi will go and pick her up, then deliver her to a place specified by the client.

High level middle men

Throughout the above discussion it has been established that there is often a network of people involved in any given sexual transaction. All three middle men I spoke to had been involved in the sex industry in Luganville for over seven years, and the eldest of

them, 'John' (34 years), said he had around 20 years' experience as a middle man. This denotes that they all have a significant amount of sex workers' contacts, with all three stating that they have around 50 sex workers' numbers. Being a more established middle man also means that they are better known amongst clients, both local and visiting. 'John', for example, used to live in the capital, Port Vila, so a lot of business men and politicians who he knows from living there contact him when they visit Luganville to initiate a sexual transaction. So, according to the middle men who were part of this research, clients contact them via established friendships; via other networks, such as local taxi drivers; or via men conversing with them, often over kava, and requesting a sexual transaction.

Another important aspect of being a middle man is being able to take a cut of the earnings from the sexual transaction. According to some participants in this research, the money from the clients is mostly given to the middle man, he will take his cut, then give the remaining money to the sex worker. This of course entails that the middle man has control over the money – how much will be given to the sex worker, and how much he is entitled to. However, in this situation he may also be able to ensure that the client pays up.

Other participants gave a different account of clients paying the middle man and the sex worker separately. In this case, while what the sex worker receives is solely for themselves, the risks of clients refusing to pay, or giving less than they initially stated, is higher, especially where the money is given after sex, which is often the case.

However, while some middle men leave once they have received their money, others may offer a kind of financial insurance to sex workers in situations where clients try to escape without paying, due to the knowledge that a botched transaction could mean that a middle man loses the sex worker's trust over future transactions, and thus future income.

As a final point, an interesting perspective which came out of my discussions with the middle men I spoke to was that they described themselves as being of service to, or doing a favour for sex workers. There was the notion amongst the middle men that other than the younger girls and women who "just like to have sex for fun [...] some desperately need cash, so we make it so they can access cash for sex." ('Freddie',

middle man, 24 years). They justify their position by being of service to men who want to have sex, and supporting women who need money, while potentially also citing responsibility that the transaction is performed appropriately³⁷. The middle men's position is not necessarily in contrast to sex workers' either, for example consider 'Rose's' (FSW, 28 years) explanation of how sex work fits into society:

There are men who work, they're tired, so they need to relax. Then there are some who don't work; they need money. This is the time when they use us for this kind of thing, for meeting these kind of men.

As the above dialogue from 'Rose' suggests, however, there are larger structural inequalities at play in Luganville more generally, namely between those who have adequate paid employment (who are mostly older men), and those who do not. The sex industry, therefore, may be deemed necessary in the growing cash based economy, and justifiable based on these inequalities.

I will now discuss the clients of sex workers, or the types of men who pay for sex, according to the people who I spoke to throughout this research.

4.2.4 Clients of sex workers

An important consideration in any research project on sex work is the type of person paying for sex, as clients often play a significant role in the levels of wellbeing experienced by sex workers, as well as revealing power dynamics at play during transactions. Every participant in this research said that the majority of clients were middle-aged and older, as it was these men who most often held employment and, therefore, had money. Younger guys were perceived more often as threats to wellbeing, were more deceptive, and more likely to do harm to sex workers. Young

³⁷ 'Freddie' (middle man, 24 years) was the most insistent on ensuring the transaction does not expose sex workers to abuse:

And the girl, we own her. You understand? I must talk about this, because from this position, we can protect our women as well. Most of us [men] aren't good; they have the kind of fucked up attitude where they like to abuse women, that kind of thing. We want to be around to protect women, to make sure that there isn't any... they hang her, or something which will threaten her in anyway. Because lots [of men] like having sex for free; they like to fuck, but maybe some don't want to pay – they think that this is something that comes easy.

men also seem to have a different role concerning sexual relationships more generally, often as casual sexual partners, even sometimes forming friendships with sex workers in order to benefit from their earnings.

First, I discuss older clients, as they make up a significant portion of men who pay for sex in Luganville, then I discuss where young men fit into the picture of sexual relations with sex workers.

Men with money

Older guys have money, men that work – middle-aged men, married men. They have money because they work, so these are the guys who pay for cunt.

‘Jeremy’ (middle man, 29 years)

Simply put, and as the explicit quote above states, the men who are able to pay for sex are those who have the money to do so. Thus, this narrows the pool of clients to those who are employed, and it seems the largest demographic of people in paid, formal employment in Luganville, and those visiting from Port Vila, are middle-aged and older men. As mentioned above, some of these clients are politicians, civil servants, or business men who travel to Luganville on work-related trips, and some work in similar areas, but live locally. These men were referred to in interviews, and in modern day Vanuatu more generally, as ‘big men’, a term which is also used when talking about a particular society in Vanuatu, and male hierarchy related to wealth accumulation and ceremonial exchange, mentioned in Section 2.6. The level of power that a man assumes when he has money, and a position as a ‘big man’, should not be underestimated, especially in the context of Vanuatu where men are also traditional figures of authority, as will be elaborated on in the following chapter. The level of authority implicit in a significant portion of sex workers’ clientele also denotes how little relative control workers have during transactions, with many ramifications in terms of sex workers’ health and wellbeing.

A point that was also brought up frequently was that a lot of men who pay for sex are already married, which contributes to the underground nature of the business. The married status of clients was also awkward for sex workers. For example, ‘Anne’ (FSW, 37 years) spoke about a situation where a guy who had been seeing her for a while

picked her up in his truck to have sex with her: “I got up and said to him, ‘You act like you’re not with a woman.’” Though ‘Anne’ was also put in a difficult position, as she later described this client’s persistence and how he essentially put the blame on her for him wanting to have sex as she had a desirable vagina. Pressure from clients, and controlling behaviours, including those related to jealousy, was a significant issue which was revealed throughout interviews and points to the challenge of sex workers having a limited ability to set boundaries around their interactions with clients.

Clients may also be deceptive towards sex workers, for example saying that they’ll pay a certain amount, then coming up with excuses as to why they can no longer pay:

“Some [clients] sometimes just lie – they tell you an amount, but after you go [i.e. have sex] they just give you an amount which is smaller.” (‘Daisy’, FSW, 24 years). Several other participants gave similar accounts, including men lying about employment, saying that they would give the sex worker money on their pay day, then failing to follow through on their ‘promise’. This was not only upsetting as the sex worker was not getting the money they were owed, but also caused feelings of humiliation.

Deception by clients also reflects the power and control they have over transactions.

As a final point, the male sex workers I spoke to also noted that older men make up the majority of their clientele, with the exception of the odd young or underage male who may be regular non-paying sexual partners. There was a perception by both male and female sex workers, however, that younger men more frequently presented threats to them than older men. I will now discuss how young men were viewed by the participants in this research.

Young men and sex workers

The male and female sex workers I interviewed spoke about being approached by young men. Both the male and female sex workers I spoke to revealed that, comparatively speaking, older clients offered less threats than younger men who often become violent, especially where alcohol is involved. One of the key characteristics of older men as well was the fact that they would usually give something in return for sex, whereas young men were described as more self-centred and rushed during sexual intercourse. As ‘Rose’ explains: “Like, I can tell you from experience, middle

aged men will pay women [for sex]. But young guys, they are only there to have sex, to feel good, [then] they leave; forget about the woman.”

Another perspective which emerged during discussions with male non-sex worker participants was that for young men, being friends with sex workers provided certain benefits. As ‘Jeremy’ (middle man, 29 years) stated: “Young guys use prostitutes for their money.” Similarly, ‘Tim’ (ex-boyfriend of sex worker, 24 years) described how young men may ‘attach themselves’ to sex workers so that they can take a share of the earnings:

There are some [young] men who prostitutes like buying kava for, like, we make them our sister³⁸. We know about their life, we don’t care about their life. I go, I am a friend, like we are friends – we come, we chat, we see men come and give money. Like, it’s a business.

So, as ‘Jeremy’ and ‘Tim’ reveal, young guys may hang around kava bars with sex workers who buy kava for them from their earnings. Young guys may also form sexual relationships with sex workers, with the difference being that “they don’t pay, they just go to relax, drink kava, then sleep.” (‘Tim’). These examples put younger men more in line with the role of casual sexual partners, though who clearly also may profit off the friendship. Young men in general play an interesting role in the sex industry in Luganville, for example as ‘runners’ or as casual sexual partners, but they also evidently present significant threats to sex workers’ wellbeing.

4.3 Sex work, and sexual and reproductive health and rights

This section will focus on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of Luganville-based sex workers. I begin by considering the issue of condom use, before looking at interviewees’ knowledge of sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and treatment seeking behaviours. I will then discuss participants’ perceptions, knowledge, and use of family planning services, and the issue of pregnancy in the context of sex work. Finally, I will discuss the serious instances of harassment, physical and sexual abuse, and other

³⁸ Making someone your sister in Vanuatu means they symbolically become a part of your family, which also entails the sharing of goods, and looking out for one another.

serious sexual and reproductive health rights offences experienced by the sex workers I spoke to, revealing the extent of the vulnerability of the sex worker population in Luganville.

In the previous chapter I stated, as a part of my positionality, that I had previously worked as a peer educator at the Northern Care Youth Centre/Clinic. This is important to reiterate as this section draws on my experience and knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

4.3.1 Condom use

Condom use seemed to be mostly very poor amongst Luganville-based sex workers. An overwhelming factor which contributes to low condom usage is refusal by clients.

Above I discussed how clients usually have a dominant position in Vanuatu society as modern ‘big men’, that is, men in higher-status employment, a position enhanced by having greater access to money. The status of clients means that when it comes to condom use, often what the client says, goes. I will firstly consider participants’ views on the rates of condom use, or non-use, then discuss how sex workers may negotiate their use.

Skin-to-skin

The term ‘skin-to-skin’, ‘meat-to-meat’, or ‘dry-dry’ came up many times when discussing why people (mostly clients, and other men) refuse to use condoms. ‘Skin-to-skin’ was also referred to as “Vanuatu-style” by several participants, and was even compared to condoms which were referred to as “modern technology”. Going ‘skin-to-skin’, therefore, is more or less normalised, and even seen as an essential part of ni-Vanuatu male sexuality. ‘Andrew’ (client, 27 years) explains:

Because mostly they [the man] want it like that [‘skin-to-skin’], because plastic, like, you don’t feel good. Like, sometimes maybe they’ll bring one [a condom], but when they go and have sex some will lie to the woman – they’ll pretend that they’ve torn [the condom packet], they’ll tear it, then just throw it away. Or sometimes, like, you put it on, and when you feel like you don’t feel anything – like, you don’t feel good – you take it off. This happens to lots of

young... like, when it's happening [sex], once they've finished doing it, they'll just think about [STIs/HIV] after.

As 'Andrew' states, the sense of entitlement over sexual satisfaction means that many men will either refuse to use condoms, or they may lie about using them, either throwing them away before, or part way through sexual intercourse.

Every participant I interviewed said that the majority of clients refuse to use condoms, and most said that client acceptance or refusal over condom use dictated whether or not one would be used. Some sex workers did not carry condoms (including one MSW who had never used one), but those who did expressed a preference to use condoms, though also noted how difficult it was to convince men to use them.

Clients' control over condom use seemed to come down to two main factors: the fact that clients are spending their money, and fear by sex workers that a client would either react violently, or a transaction would be lost if they continued to negotiate their use. As 'Mary' (FSW, 17 years) explains:

When a man gives money, but the woman says, 'You must use a condom,' and if the man is cross, it will be different then. The woman will think, 'I want the money, but now this guy wants to have sex without a condom.' [...] The thing is, she will just let the man have sex with her, then get the money. But if she doesn't want to, she won't get the money.

As 'Mary' reveals, negotiation over condom use is often difficult, as it may result in the loss of a transaction, where receiving money for sex usually denotes following the wishes of the client. Clients may also become cross at the request to use a condom, resulting in risks of abuse, and potentially rendering sex workers too scared to ask for a condom to be used in the first place.

Daisy: I tell them, 'If you don't want to [use a condom], then I won't... we go [and have sex], but you have to use a condom.' [...] Some, they become cross. I've faced challenges regarding this, like, some hit me. One of our big challenges is they don't want to use [condoms]. They just don't think! Lots of them pass on STIs. Like, they want to hit me – they can't control themselves, [or] what they do with their anger.

Me: So, they're cross because you asked them to use a condom?

Daisy: Yes. They don't care. They know [about STIs/HIV], but they don't care about life. It's not easy. They just think about sex. I know now that I can no longer trust men.

'Daisy' (FSW, 24 years) describes the challenge of requesting that condoms are used, not just as the transaction may no longer occur, but also as men can become cross, and even aggressive as a result. This can bring about feelings of disillusionment and distrust, as 'Daisy' relays. As a result, a perception which emerged was that it was usually just easier to 'follow his thinking' ('Michael', MSW, 17 years), and not use a condom.

Condom negotiation

Despite the numerous obstacles, some participants did explain how they negotiated condom use. 'Anne' (FSW, 37 years) was one participant who was insistent about condom use. While 'Anne' said that she did not use condoms when she was younger, after several trips to the Northern Care Youth Clinic (NCYC), she is now persistent when it comes to their use: "I'll [say], 'You don't want to use a condom, you don't want to go with me.'"

'Kathy' (FSW, 37 years) uses a similar tactic to 'Anne', with the addition of using the negotiation to try and gain some influence over the transaction:

Some, when you say, 'I want to use a condom,' they'll say, 'No, I don't want to.' I get up, I say, 'OK, I'm going now.' Like, I want the money, but to use me, you have to use a condom, because condoms are something which can protect you, protect you from all of those infections. He'll say, 'Why do you want to use a condom?' then I'll say, 'Did you go to school or not?' Then he'll just feel embarrassed, and leave.

Others also stated that their knowledge of sexual health assisted in their negotiation process, some even attempting to educate clients as to why condom use was important.

A sex worker's level of bargaining power was also considered by participants to be an

important tool for influencing the transaction.

Tim: This girl³⁹, she has medicine which she takes before she goes out with a man⁴⁰, then there are those condoms which block her... she uses her condoms⁴¹.

Me: So, there are some sex workers who use condoms?

Tim: No, only those who deal high – high rate. But those who [deal] at 2000/3000/4000 vatu, dry-dry, skin-to-skin.

There are several notable points in this passage of dialogue with ‘Tim’ (ex-boyfriend of sex worker, 24 years). Firstly, he and ‘Jeremy’ (‘middle man’, 29 years) were the only research participants who spoke about female condoms. Secondly, he reveals that only those who ‘deal high’ use condoms, implying that there is a hierarchy amongst sex workers in Luganville, and that only those at the higher end of the scale, presumably due to the bargaining power they have thanks to their higher status and popularity, are able to negotiate the use of condoms. There are two factors which were suggested regarding sex workers assuming a higher status. The first factor, which relates to ‘Tim’s’ ex-girlfriend, was fame and popularity usually accrued via being involved in pornographic films. The second factor relates to the age of sex workers. Older and more experienced sex workers seemed to be more aware of the risks involved in unprotected sex, and were more experienced in dealing with clients. Younger sex workers, on the other hand, were either less aware, were more ambivalent towards risks to sexual and reproductive health, and/or they were anxious or lacking in confidence to contradict the wishes of clients.

While some sex workers may have greater negotiating power, the risks mentioned above, especially where the client has already given money or paid for other goods, are still relevant. Several sex workers I spoke to, for instance, were sceptical over educating clients, as they felt this knowledge would simply be dismissed. ‘Daisy’ (FSW, 24 years) revealed a common sentiment: “I think because they don’t give birth, that’s why they don’t care.” In other words, a significant portion of responsibility, over both

³⁹ ‘Tim’ is referring to his ex-girlfriend, who is now a well-known sex worker.

⁴⁰ ‘Tim’ is referring to the contraceptive pill, most likely Microgynon.

⁴¹ ‘Tim’ is referring here to female condoms, which he clarified later in our discussion.

the client's sexual satisfaction, and, conversely, sexual and reproductive health, is on the sex worker. 'Daisy's' point also reveals that the tactics discussed above may not by themselves denote the client's eventual acceptance to use condoms.

4.3.2 STIs, HIV/AIDS, and treatment seeking behaviour

As has been discussed above, condom use amongst sex workers is low, which puts them at higher risks of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). During interviews, I sought participants' knowledge of STIs and HIV/AIDS, as well as norms around seeking treatment in cases where someone has contracted an STI, or is found to be HIV-positive.

STIs and HIV/AIDS

Every participant I interviewed in this research had some level of knowledge about STIs, with gonorrhoea as the most commonly identified. Many also identified that STIs were an increasing concern in their communities. Whereas some only acknowledged generally that there were some *rabis sik*⁴² around, a few could also identify some symptoms, namely, abnormal and smelly discharge, painful urination, vaginal bleeding, and jaundice were identified by some participants.

However, there also seemed to be some misconceptions about how STIs were spread, for example 'Andrew' (client, 27 years) seemed to imply that, as women who *wokabaot*⁴³ do so after they have washed, then they sweat but do not wash again until the following day, they consequently develop STIs. The male non-sex worker participants also seemed to think STIs were something inherent to sex workers, for example 'Tim' (ex-boyfriend of sex work, 24 years) apparently blames sex workers for the spread of HIV/AIDS: "...the men will get sick, they'll catch AIDS, because they [sex workers] just pass it to them quickly, then leave." Thus, the burden of responsibility seems to be put on sex workers, a contradictory point considering they often are unable to negotiate condom use.

⁴² *Rabis sik* is the term in Bislama for sexually transmitted infections.

⁴³ *Wokabaot* is a euphemism for engaging in sex work, also denoting that freedom of movement for women is deemed synonymous with sexual promiscuity.

The sex workers I spoke to, however, seemed overall to have more balanced views on STI transmission, noting that men often pass STIs on to them, and stressing the need to “provide for [i.e. look after/protect] your body” (‘Mary’, FSW, 17 years). Several sex workers noted how men who have multiple sexual partners are just as much the culprits for spreading STIs, if not more so, as they assume so much control over sexual relations. The views of the male non-sex workers in this research is revealing of how many men in Luganville fail to take responsibility for sexual health. By contrast, many of the female sex worker participants gave considered answers to questions on sexual health, and, perhaps in line with the unjust burden put on them, spoke of the importance of looking out for oneself and one’s health.

The male sex workers I spoke to had a different grasp on STIs and HIV, one stating that he never really thinks about the risks involved in unprotected sex, another noting how he found it difficult talking about sexual health with clients, though he recognised there is some risk involved when condoms are not used. Only ‘Michael’ (17 years) spoke directly about how STIs and HIV can be passed through anal sex, saying that he gained awareness of sexual health through attending awareness programmes.

Seeking treatment

The place most frequently identified by participants for seeking medical treatment or advice on sexual health was the Northern Care Youth Clinic (NCYC), a free sexual and reproductive health clinic near the main road in Luganville. The Northern Provincial Hospital (300-500 vatu per visit) was also mentioned, as well as local *kleva*, who are also referred to as ‘leaf doctors’ and provide *kastom* remedies for a variety of illnesses. Some participants also said that they recommended friends of theirs go for check-ups at a clinic, or the hospital, especially if they had identified symptoms of STIs.

Of the male sex workers I spoke to, however, one of them had never been for a sexual health check-up, and one had only ever been for one when he lived in Port Vila⁴⁴. As mentioned, ‘Michael’ had awareness of sexual health, though he never spoke about

⁴⁴ There is a group of men who have sex with men (MSM) who work at NCYC’s corresponding clinic in Port Vila, so there is more support for undertaking sexual health check-ups for homosexual men and male sex workers.

having gone to a clinic himself for a check-up or blood test. The reasons given by the former two as to why they had not been to a clinic was primarily due to distrust of nursing staff, or shame. For example, 'Jack' (23 years) explains:

I know about NCYC, I want to go, but I just haven't gone to do a test. [...] I'm scared that I'll go, then the nurse will say, after the check-up the nurse will tell me I've got something. This is what makes me scared about going.

Here, 'Jack' expresses fear over finding out he has an STI or is HIV-positive which will mean having to deal with the stigma of having a *rabis sik*.

Kleva were also noted as a source of treatment for STIs. A *kleva* is often described as someone who prescribes, makes, and distributes traditional medicine, which is often a specific leaf, or mix of leaves depending on the illness being treated, and perhaps some other local ingredients, which are combined into a liquid formula, and then drunk by the patient. *Kleva* are also spiritually divine, and may use prayer and massage to cure illness as well (Viney, et al., 2014). 'Jenny' (FSW, 40 years) was a *kleva* herself, and spoke about treating STIs. 'Andrew' (client, 27 years) also spoke about how he had sought treatment for an STI from a local *kleva*.

While the majority of participants access modern medical practitioners, such as NCYC and the hospital, *klevas* still clearly play a role in terms of who are approached for advice and treatment for STIs. Trust plays a significant role in terms of whether or not sex workers go for check-ups, and where they go. Stigma associated with STIs and HIV-positivity also creates barriers for sex workers accessing sexual health services, which is no doubt compounded by the fact that sex workers seem to subsume a significant proportion of the responsibility for both STI and HIV transmission and prevention.

4.3.3 Family planning, pregnancy, and parenting

Uptake of family planning services is not yet widespread, even in the semi-urban area of Luganville where clinics have a variety of contraceptives available. Many participants stated that those who use family planning methods were often women who already had children, with some even observing difficulties and stigma associated with younger women accessing family planning methods. Most of the

female sex workers I spoke to already had more than one child, often with different fathers, and many gave birth to their first child at an early age. I will first discuss research participants' knowledge and use of family planning methods, as well as perceptions of those methods, before looking at pregnancy and parenting.

Family planning

Most of the female sex workers I spoke to had a reasonably good awareness of family planning methods, and many had experience using at least one form of contraceptive, aside from condoms. Two of the FSW I spoke to said that they had undergone tubal ligation. Other contraceptives mentioned were the Depo-Provera (or the injection), the pill, inter-urine device (IUD), the calendar method⁴⁵, and the 'pull out' method, where the male ejaculates outside of the woman's vagina. It seemed, however, that many participants who had taken a method of family planning had only done so for a small time, with some complaining of irregular bleeding or spotting, and a larger appetite, or weight increases.

'Felicity' (FSW, 28 years) was the only participant who spoke about the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP), which is available in Luganville from clinics, and over the counter at the local pharmacy. 'Felicity' was also unique in this research due to her knowledge about abortion, and revealed the realities of abortion in Luganville. Simply put, while she said that medical abortions are available, the cost is significant, so, unless a woman can borrow money from friends and relatives, this is usually not an option. Most women, therefore, opt for local abortion methods, which is a concoction made up of hot coffee, lemon, and a type of red leaf which is pumped up the woman's vagina. When this does not work however, 'Felicity' stated that it was God's will for the woman to have the baby, so she has to just accept her situation. This reflects other participants' perceptions that usually when a woman falls pregnant, she must accept her fate, and, especially in the case of sex workers becoming pregnant, they will be lucky if they can gain paternal recognition.

⁴⁵ The calendar method, also known as the 'natural method' or 'fertility awareness-based method', is where a woman tracks ovulation (i.e. the stage of the menstrual cycle where the egg is released) and only has vaginal sex on days in her menstrual cycle where she is least likely to become pregnant.

Community perceptions of family planning

There was an apparent perception by most participants that family planning was for women who have already had a child. Even those who noted that family planning was also for young women said that there was some apprehension over uptake. As well as some of the physical and hormonal side effects, noted above, gossip, or fear of gossip also seems to play a role in reducing uptake, as 'Felicity' (FSW, 28 years) describes:

Lots of people from here talk; many people will talk about this kind of thing [use of family planning] inside their communities. They like talking about women like, 'Why is she taking family planning? She's not married, so why is she taking family planning?'

Similarly, 'Jenny' (40 years) relays a possible implication that use of family planning denotes sexual promiscuity: [young women] are not even with a man, but because they are playing around like this, that's why they are using it [family planning].

'Jenny' was one of the oldest participants I spoke to, though her age did not necessarily differentiate her from younger participants, some of whom also noted how family planning was mostly taken by mothers, and that it was good for spacing children, rather than postponing first conception. 'Rachel' (FSW, 30 years) and 'Amy' (FSW, 28 years), for example, both said that family planning methods were *only* given out to women *post*-childbirth.

There also were some rumours that participants spoke about which may play a role in sex workers' apprehension to use family planning, such as that some methods cause cancer, or they may prevent women from being able to bear children in the future. Below I will also discuss the issue of reproductive coercion as another reason behind sex workers not using birth control.

Pregnancy

As previously mentioned, most of the female sex workers I spoke to already had children, and in most cases the children were still living with them, except for one whose child had been adopted, and one who was raising one of her children while the other one lived with her mother on a different island. 'Anne' (37 years) even spoke

about using pregnancy as a way to take a break from being hassled by her clients, though sometimes to no avail:

Like, I just wanted to get pregnant so I could stop, so men would just stop hassling me. I had to get pregnant. But when my stomach was big, they would still be after me. Then, once I'd given birth, they would stop. But when I was heavily pregnant, they would still ask me.

'Anne' has seven children to different fathers, a similar situation to other participants in this research. Having many children without paternal recognition or support may also mean that sex workers find it more difficult to leave sex work should they want to due to the fact they have dependants. Several participants noted how a man, even when it is known that he is the father, will either deny paternity or leave once the baby is born. The fact that many clients are married would also play a part in their refusal to take responsibility.

Given all of the above, the fact that condom use is low, and that many school aged students reportedly engage in sex work, teenage pregnancy rates are also high, and this was noted by participants as an increasing concern in their communities. Mis- or lack of information was a factor contributing to this issue, as 'Angela' (FSW, 33 years) pointed out: "...most of them [younger girls] know how to sleep with a man, but they don't know that this [family planning] is good for [them] as well."

As a final point, there are two key slang terms which also came up several times during my discussions with research participants: '*pikinini blong rod*' and '*pikinini olsem lada*'. The former translates as 'child of the road', and relates to the phrase 'woman of the road', which is a euphemism for sex workers. '*Pikinini blong rod*' also denotes that the child is of unknown paternity, and the result of a woman's wayward behaviour. '*Pikinini olsem lada*' is more difficult to translate literally, but refers to when a woman has two or more children in very quick succession. However, '*pikinini olsem lada*', when used by men, takes on a slightly different meaning, namely, that of controlling women, or ensuring that they are stuck in the house looking after babies, and no longer have any opportunity to seek other sexual partners.

Both of these phrases were employed by research participants, and help to show how use of family planning services, including safe abortion, is limited and results in a double-edged sword of stigma and gossip. On the one hand, use of family planning by young women instigates gossip, but, on the other hand, pregnancy as a result of sex work also produces stigma and the significant burden of child rearing. Pregnancy can also be used as a form of power and control in relationships, which will be now be discussed further.

4.3.4 Violations of sex workers' sexual and reproductive health rights in Luganville

Every sex worker, male and female, interviewed during this research had experienced abuse of some sort. Some of the gross violations of Luganville-based ni-Vanuatu sex workers' rights have been mentioned above, including a limited ability to negotiate the use of condoms. This section aims to go into further detail on some of the significant risks, violence, and human rights abuses faced by the participants in this research.

Physical and sexual violence and harassment were risks frequently cited by sex workers. Of course, physical and sexual violence are subsumed under abuse of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), however, here instances of physical and sexual violence will be considered on their own, while I will discuss other rights abuses under the sub-heading of SRHR.

Physical violence

For female sex workers, key perpetrators of physical violence were wives of clients. Many participants spoke about violence inflicted by their clients' wives, one even recalling how the wife of one of her clients hit her with an iron bar, breaking her arm. Another spoke about a couple of friends of hers who were beaten up by a group of enraged wives, while their clients ran away. Here sex workers are blamed for men paying for sex from them, which is revealing of the structural gender inequalities at play. However, I should also point out here that for many married women, they would be putting themselves potentially in a very vulnerable position, physically, financially, and otherwise, if they confronted their husbands.

Some of the sex workers I spoke to were also married themselves, which may bring about significant risks to their wellbeing, leaving them exposed to domestic violence as well. Even though sex workers are not the culprits when it comes to men's infidelity, and often work as sex workers due to financial need, they end up bearing most of the blame because of men's greater overall authority in multiple spheres of life.

Sex workers, both male and female, had also experienced physical violence at the hands of clients, especially where alcohol was involved, and when they refused to have sex. The sex workers I interviewed had been hit and physically handled, and even had stones and bottles thrown at them. In these cases, sex workers were often too scared or intimidated to seek help, leading to ongoing harassment, or sexual violence.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence was also widely experienced by participants in this research, and it appears that little or no consideration is given to gaining sexual consent from sex workers. 'Michael' (MSW, 17 years), for example, literally stated that he feels sometimes that he no longer has any choice but to have sex due to a fear of violence. The apparent rationale behind this disregard for sexual consent is due to the fact that the client gives money, or pays for goods on the premise that he will have sexual intercourse. This means that there seems to be no option for sex workers to withdraw their consent, and reinforces the power and control men have over sexual transactions, to such an extent that they may inflict physical violence or rape when things do not go their way.

'John' (middle man, 24 years), for example, shared a story of a sex worker who was paid to have sex by six young men who had returned from the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme in New Zealand. These six young men had sex with her one after the other, even past the point where she was obviously in pain, and had eventually passed out. When I asked why these young men did not stop, or why he did not stop them, as he was present during the incident, 'John' replied: "Because they gave money to have sex. They had already paid. That's it. You understand? It's her and my problem now; my problem as the agent, and hers, because I organised it." The point which came across is clear – money equals power. It seems the rights of the sex

worker were overlooked, her wellbeing considered only after each of the young men had got his money's worth. This account, of course, was not given by the woman herself, but many aspects of 'John's' dialogue suggest the coercive nature of the transaction. I noted in Section 2.6 how men have made up the majority of migrant labour forces employed in Australia and New Zealand. The access and control these men (particularly, I hypothesise, young men) have over wealth gained through these schemes could entail a license or expectation that this money may enable them to purchase unfettered access to sex. This reveals the 'gendering' of sex and money in the sex industry, and the meaning behind access to, and control of wealth. These issues will be explored in the following chapter⁴⁶.

Several sex worker participants also recounted situations where men had observed that a woman or man was a sex worker, and proceeded to force sexual intercourse on them. Other incidents of gang rape were also shared by interviewees. Furthermore, the exchange of money as part of sex work also plays a role in the justice system. While the police may be called out when someone is assaulted or raped, the situation is perceived differently if payment has been made:

It will be different because the police will be like, 'No, because this guy has already paid for her. This man has paid for this woman's body, for her to go out with him, but this woman no longer wants to.' So, the police will not do anything... - 'Maggie' (FSW, 37 years)

'Maggie's' account above that police will consider a case of abuse or rape differently if they find out money has been given reveals the arbitrary standards by which sex workers are able to claim their rights. Money seems to hold a significant level of power over the proceedings, and seems to undermine the recognition of sex workers' human rights. The assumption that sexual satisfaction will follow where money is involved is so prevalent that women may even be assumed to be lying if they say they are menstruating so cannot have sex. For example, 'Mary' (FSW, 17 years) spoke of men putting their hands down women's underpants to check whether or not they were wearing a sanitary pad. This example reveals an assumed indebtedness of sex workers

⁴⁶ For a specific analysis of the gendered dynamics of the RSE scheme see Cummings, 2013.

towards clients due to the comparative weight put on money over sex workers' wellbeing.

Abuses to sexual and reproductive health rights

Above I summarised participants' experiences of sexual and physical violence, which represent abuses of their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). This section will discuss some other instances relating to SRHR which caused participants, or people they know significant harm. I discuss below the issue of harassment, before looking at two stories told to me during two separate interviews: one regarding a participant's experiences of forced pregnancy, and the other regarding a participant's friend who had been forced into a marriage with a client. These examples are important to consider as they reveal the extent of rights abuses faced by ni-Vanuatu sex workers.

Harassment

The harassment of sex workers has already been mentioned, for instance, the situations noted above where clients have relentlessly demanded sex from sex workers. Harassment, including the yelling of swear words and other derogatory terms, was also experienced by many research participants. Harassment can also take the form of men telling their friends that a woman is a sex worker, and the sex worker then being harassed by their clients' friends. For example, as 'Mary' (17 years) explains: "They [clients] talk. If a girl walking is around like this [i.e. engaging in sex work] on the street: 'That girl, she's the kind of girl who has sex with lots of men.' They like selling her all around town." Sexual harassment is a common feature of women's lives generally in Luganville⁴⁷, but, where someone is a known sex worker, or is rumoured to be sexually promiscuous, harassment and, as discussed, risk of sexual assault becomes a significant, and constant threat.

Forced pregnancy

⁴⁷ This I know from personal experience of sexual harassment and assault while living in Luganville, and from friends' accounts of similar experiences. 'Daisy' (FSW, 24 years) also spoke to me at length about the rates of sexual assault, including rape, as an increasing issue in Luganville, and 'Susan' (FSW, 20 years) spoke about harassment as a daily reality in Luganville.

The issue of women being coerced into pregnancy represents a gross violation of their SRHR, and is a concern relating more generally to relationships in Vanuatu⁴⁸, though sex workers are certainly vulnerable to this as well. Below is a particularly harrowing story from 'Anne' (37 years) about being forced to carry the child of a client.

After I got a *lup*⁴⁹, it hadn't even been in one year, I went to [Port] Vila, but there was a man who was really crazy about me, and he forced me to go with him to see a nurse to remove it so that we could have a child; so I would become pregnant with his baby. He told me that if I did not remove it, he would force me to stay in Vila, and never go back to Santo. But my children are in Santo, and my husband. Then he said he wanted me to have his child so that he would always think about us, and so he could keep coming to Santo because of his child, but he really meant that he would come for me. I said yes to him, and we went to get [the IUD] removed because I was worried that I would no longer be able to go back to Santo as I would have to remain at his house. It was quite hard for me to get away from him. So, I accepted so that I could come back to Santo. When I was two months pregnant, I came back to Santo. I had some other children of some other men where it happened in the same way. The man I'm with now, I don't have children with him; all of my kids have different fathers. Then, when they [the fathers of her children] come and see their kids, they think about the woman over the children; they think about sex over the children they've made. They give money as well. Sometimes they go, they ring me, they send money.

'Anne's' story is revealing of not only the incredible challenges of setting boundaries with clients, but also how pregnancy may be used as a method of power and control. Basically, what 'Anne' recalled was a situation of forced lifelong sexual contracts with

⁴⁸ This was a common issue which was brought up during both my time working in Luganville, and during my research period. Pregnancy may be a way of 'securing' a relationship, which is also inherent in the phrase '*mekem pikinini olsem lada*' which I explained in Section 4.3.3. While I heard many instances of men impregnating women using various methods of coercion, or 'convincing', I also came across cases of women becoming pregnant (even lying about being on the pill) without the consent of the male sexual partner.

⁴⁹ 'Lup' is the word in Bislama for copper inter-urine devices (IUD)

the men who have fathered her children. Given that there are other participants with many children to different fathers, and the fact that pregnancy can be used to control partners in general in Vanuatu, reproductive coercion is likely a general incident of gender based violence. Ultimately, the power and control exerted by clients results in severe abuses to sex workers' rights, including the right to autonomy over their body.

Forced marriage

This story relates to the themes discussed above in relation to 'Anne's' story of the extent to which clients may use their power and control over sexual transactions. This story was told by 'Susan' (FSW, 20 years) about one of her close friends from school who ended up being forced into a marriage with a client. 'Susan' explained that, when her friend was in year 9 at school, an older, married man would come and give her money and buy her things, and she would go have sex with him, however:

Then this guy, maybe he started thinking that she had to be with him because he'd spent so much money on her. So, she tried to hide at her Dad's, but this guy would follow with a musket in order to get her back, so that her father could not defend her. She would try and hide, hide anywhere, but this man would go after her. [...] With this man, like, he thinks that she must be with him because he has spent a lot of money on her – 'You can't run away now. If you want to be free, you have to give back all the money I've spent on you. If you can't pay it back, that's it.'

This girl has faced a hard time because of this man; she saw it like a game, but this man took it seriously, he took it like, 'You have used up heaps of my money. I must be with you.' So now, she no longer has any choice; she tried to hide, but she couldn't. [...] So now she is married to this man. I've heard that he beats her...

Of course, 'Susan' here is not giving a personal account, though she was intimately involved during this period of her friend's life, assisting with trying to hide her, and witnessing this man coming and threatening them with a gun. Essentially, this man coerced this young woman into a marriage by entrapping her in financial debt. 'Susan' depicts a naïve young woman who was having a bit of fun, yet this story also reveals

how sex work can take a horrific turn due to the financial coercion, physical violence and manipulation clients may use during transactions.

Both of the stories above reveal the extent to which men assume power and control over sexual transactions in the context of Vanuatu, and how the transaction can be manipulated in ways which completely undermine the sexual and reproductive health rights of sex workers. Money is power, yet access to resources is also gendered in Vanuatu, with men holding a significant proportion of higher paid jobs, particularly in government and public sector positions. Men, especially men employed in these higher paid positions, not only have financial control, but also the (real or potential) social and political power as part of the 'big man' structure. One of the most gruelling aspects of power, including financial authority, which is apparent in the findings of this research, is it gives certain people leverage to override other's essential human rights, and not, it seems, have to face any consequences themselves.

4.4 Factors surrounding the sex industry in Luganville

This third and final section of the research findings will briefly consider some of the factors surrounding the sex work industry in Luganville. First, I discuss what interviewees said regarding the money earned via sex work, and how they use it. Then I consider sex work as a part of 'laef blo taon' ('town life'), and its relationship to *kastom*, a term which is often used in opposition to modernity. I then discuss the issue of sexuality, particularly in relation to perceptions of men who have sex with men (MSM) which ignites overt instances of stigma and assault. Finally, I will consider some examples of sex workers' relationships outside of sex work, as a way also to consider broader dynamics of relationships in Luganville. As will become apparent, levels of intimate partner violence seem to be high, and this could foster feeling of disillusionment amongst women in particular towards relationships.

4.4.1 Sex and money, life in town, and *Kastom*

As has already been revealed, money plays a key role in sexual transactions, and in the reasons behind why men and women start engaging in sex work. This section will look further into how participants perceive the money they earned via sex work, and how

those perceptions influence how they spend that money. I will then discuss sex work as a part of living in town, before looking briefly at the relationship between *kastom* and sex work.

Sex and money

...sex is just about 10 – 20 minutes, over, finished. They just go, 2000/3000 [vatu] out of 10 – 20 minutes. And then one full day of work, you'll see about 900 – 1000 vatu. Less than 10 minutes, you can get some money. – 'John' (middle man, 34 years)

The quote above reveals one of the perceptions of money earned from sex work; namely, that it is 'easy money'. Comparatively, sex work is a lot more lucrative, and less of a time commitment, than a lot of other jobs which may be available. However, several participants also referred to the money earned via sex work as 'dirty money', which denotes a belief that there are moral boundaries around what it may be spent on, and often that it was spent quickly so that the money could not be traced back to its origins. While some participants stated that the money they earned was used on food, rent, and school fees, others were adamant that they could not spend their money on such things because of its 'dirty' origins.

Life in town

Living in town, as distinct from living rurally in villages, often underpins peoples' entrance into sex work. Living in town means money becomes essential to living, as well as participating in social life. Furthermore, several participants also mentioned that sex work is becoming more prevalent in Luganville due to an increase in the population, alongside the financial needs and wants of living in town, although without adequate paid employment to match. Living in villages, on the other hand, specifically on one's *kastom* land, or land that is inherited from family lines and marriages, relies on subsistence agriculture. Furthermore, though money is increasingly playing a role even rurally, for example in order to pay for school fees, and for material to build more robust housing, money may also be earned through *kastom* land on an as needed basis.

Although people are less reliant on a cash economy in rural areas, some participants still revealed the emergence of sex work in villages. However, where sex work occurs in rural communities, it is usually influenced by larger urban centres such as Luganville and Port Vila, and men give money, or other goods, more as a gift. 'John' (middle man, 34 years) explained the difference between paid sex in town and in villages:

John: [In the village] it's up to you. You just give how much money you want to give. Because they [women in the village] don't know what it is to earn money from sex; they're not expecting anything, it's up to your heart to give them.... In the village, you can have sex for free because they don't know the life in Vila, or in town. [...] In town it's become like a business.

Me: But in the village...

John: It's up to your heart. I have sex with her, ok, and I give you 1000/2000vt which is my heart I give to you because I have had sex with you.

This perception of the money exchanged as either a gift (notably for women in rural areas who are not exposed to the 'ways' of town) or business-like transaction is considered in depth in the following chapter.

***Kastom* and sex work**

Another distinction between life in town and life in villages is the relative strength of *kastom*, or traditional values and ways of life⁵⁰. Where town is a space influenced by the introduced cash economy and 'foreign ways', villages are described as areas which are the guardians of *kastom*. Both 'Freddie' (middle man, 24 years) and 'John' (middle man, 34 years) were explicit in stating that sex work went against *kastom* laws, noting that a woman would be fined by the chief if she was discovered to be selling sex, especially as the majority of clients are married.

4.4.2 Sexuality

⁵⁰ This is not to imply that *kastom* or 'culture' is an unchanging object of enquiry, rather than a complex, diverse, and ever-changing intermingling of multiple histories, beliefs, and 'ways'. *Kastom* here also relates to the 'insular notion of *kastom*' as political and gendered rhetoric described in Section 2.6.

This section will briefly discuss the issue of sexuality, primarily considering the experiences of male sex workers, and other participants' prejudices around homosexuality. I will also briefly discuss the female sex worker participants' sexuality, the term 'sexuality' here also referring to sexual pleasure.

As mentioned above, the three male sex workers I spoke to had all experienced some form of violence, often from other young men. Two of the MSW I interviewed had previously lived in Port Vila and, interestingly, made comparisons between the situation for homosexual men in Port Vila and Luganville. Both of them said that, whereas in Port Vila there are occasions where men who have sex with men (MSM) have been beaten up, in Luganville it "happens all the time" ('Michael', 17 years). Thus, apparently Luganville has far greater levels of prejudice towards MSM, and other minorities.

The other male non-sex worker participants also described intolerance towards homosexuality throughout my discussions with them, often expressing aggression when the topic of homosexual sex was brought up. 'Tim' (ex-boyfriend of sex worker, 24 years) explicitly told me about a situation where he came across two men having sex, and how he beat them both up, and coerced the MSW into giving him the money which he had earned from the transaction. 'Tim' also stated that he believed homosexual people have no place in Vanuatu.

Perhaps it is the frequent discrimination faced by MSM that entails that alcohol and/or kava are often consumed prior to sexual intercourse as a way to counteract the stigma involved in homosexual sex. 'Jack' (MSW, 23 years) stated that he simply could not enjoy having sex unless he was drunk.

Interestingly, and in contrast to the above, there also seems to be some level of sexual experimentation amongst young, and apparently heterosexual men. For example, 'Michael' (MSW, 17 years) described how some young men will spy on men having sex with other men, and want to try. As 'Michael' puts it: "When they see another guy doing it, like, they look, they say, 'I'll copy; I'll try as well.'" So, young men can see having sex with other men as an experiment, and may then pressure other men, especially male sex workers, into having sex with them.

Finally, I note that several of the female sex workers I spoke to said that they often derived sexual pleasure from having sex with clients, with one stating that she insists upon also gaining enjoyment from the transaction. However, several also spoke about clients being too hasty, with one also saying that she often found sex painful. There is, therefore, a broad spectrum of sex workers' sexual experiences, and while some said that they mostly enjoyed having sex, this was often post the consumption of alcohol or kava, and was very much dependent on treatment by clients.

4.4.3 Relationships outside of sex work

This final section will look at some participants' relationships, or perceptions of long-term relationships outside of sex work. The purpose of this discussion is to be able to observe sex work within the broader scope of relationships in the context of Luganville, Vanuatu.

Overall the picture drawn by participants of relationships is grim – it is one of deception, cheating, abuse, jealousy, and unplanned pregnancies. One participant, for example, said that the key motivator for her becoming a sex worker was when her husband gave her an STI, which he had clearly contracted by being unfaithful. 'Daisy' (FSW, 24 years) also spoke about the problem of alcohol abuse and intimate partner violence:

Here, I think especially drunk men bring about the most distress for women. Even my boyfriend, when he is drunk, he must fight. Sometimes I have to run away; I have to find a way to get out, because when he is drunk [mimes getting punched in the face]. He hits me; he doesn't care. [...] Like, when I stay put, he'll say, 'You want me to kill you?' After I just humble myself; I forgive him.

'Daisy's' was one of several participants who discussed violence in relationships; 'Felicity' (FSW, 28 years) also described in some depth a past relationship she had been in which was incredibly abusive, before discussing her current boyfriend who is emotionally manipulative and can become cross when she refuses to have sex with him. 'Felicity', along with other participants, also stated that men may impregnate a woman, then want nothing to do with her once the baby is born. This situation was

particularly of concern to 'Felicity' as she had a suspicion that she was pregnant at the time of the interview, and was trying to weigh up her options if her suspicion turned out to be true.

Jealousy is another major issue which has been previously discussed in relation to sex workers' clients, but was also brought up by several participants when referring to other relationships. For example, 'Jack' (MSW, 23 years) mentioned that his boyfriend had stolen his phone out of jealousy. Jealousy also frequently related to the violence and coercion experienced by participants at the hands of their partners.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the key findings of my research undertaken in Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu, which had the overall aim of understanding ni-Vanuatu sex workers' experiences of, and limits to claiming their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). This chapter has discussed the results of interviews undertaken with 15 female sex workers, one ex-sex worker, 3 male sex workers, 3 'middle men', one client, and an ex-boyfriend of a sex worker. I divided the findings into eleven categories or sections, beginning with the technicalities of sex work in the context of Luganville, before turning to a specific look at SRHR, and finally considering some surrounding factors, such as sex and money, sexuality, and relationships.

In terms of the technicalities of sex work in Luganville, I began by discussing why sex workers start engaging in sex work, namely due to marriage or relationship breakdown, financial need, participation in social life, or being 'convinced' by peers or clients/middle men. I then discussed the sexual transaction itself, followed by the role middle men play in transactions, and the different types of middle men. Clients were then discussed, and I observed how participants stated that the majority were older, and often married men.

The sections concerning SRHR began with a look at condom use amongst sex workers, and observed how often clients dictated whether or not condoms would be used during a transaction. Low condom usage directly links to STI and HIV rates. The following section on STIs/HIV and treatment seeking behaviour revealed that, while people are aware of STIs and HIV, this does not necessarily change behaviour,

especially among clients. In terms of seeking treatment, the Northern Care Youth Clinic, which is a free sexual and reproductive health clinic in Luganville, was the most frequently cited. A few participants also mentioned the hospital and local *kleva*, or traditional healers, as the first point of call for medical advice and treatment.

Use of family planning was not consistent, though some had tried, or at least had awareness of the availability of family planning medication. Most of the female participants I spoke to had children, often more than one, and up to as many as eight. There also seemed to be some misinformation and stigma associated with using family planning, and several participants expressed that it was reserved for women who already had children, or were married. The risks and human rights abuses faced by sex workers were significant, and ranged from physical and sexual violence, to emotional and reproductive coercion, and harassment. I also discussed one example of forced pregnancy, and another of forced marriage.

The final three sections looked into factors surrounding sex work, beginning with how sex workers conceive of, and use the money they earn from sex work. Due to the stigma brought about by earning money through sex, many spent their money quickly on kava or alcohol, though some also used the money to pay for rent, food, school fees, and other essentials. Sex work is something mostly related to living in town, an environment which relies on the cash economy. *Kastom* law, which is followed more vigilantly in rural areas, was also viewed as being firmly against sex work. Regarding relationships outside of sex work, many participants had negative perceptions, and experiences of intimate partner violence.

Having now looked at the key findings of this research, I will now analyse these findings further, and discuss them in relation to my key literatures and gender, power, and rights in the context of Vanuatu.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Above I described the key findings from my conversations with female and male sex workers, an ex-sex worker, middle men, a client, and an ex-boyfriend of a sex worker. There were several notable points which emerged from these conversations, which I will now discuss. Sex work sits at a contentious crossroad between ‘insular notions of *kastom*’ (of which Christianity is a central value) and modernity, and negotiations between the two. Sex workers’ contentious position also exposes some key tensions in relation to gender, power, and rights in the context of, as discussed in my literature review, develop*man*. This discussion will primarily concern female sex workers, and unpacking the sex industry along gendered lines, which includes insights from the male non-sex worker participants. While I would argue for a similar approach which engages deeply with the gendered assumptions which underpin male sex workers’ experiences, and limits to claiming their rights, these issues will not be discussed here due to the limited scope of this thesis.

In the first half of my discussion, I begin by discussing how sex work can be seen as an extension of norms of courtship. This discussion is then followed by an analysis of modern configurations of ‘big men’, and how new forms of wealth accumulation, and sexual relations, have been adopted into this trajectory of masculine influence and identity.

In the second half of my discussion I delve deeper into the issue of rights, and how they might be conceived in the context of Luganville’s sex industry. I discuss notions of how sex work was perceived to be inherent to the people who engage in that work; sex workers seemed to be perceived as the objects of exchange, and sexual acts performed as part of sex work as a natural extension of who they are. This discussion will draw on the theory of ‘body work’, particularly in relation to conceptualisation of the body as a constitution of the self.

Finally, I look more specifically at the issue of rights in relation to sex workers in Luganville, with a gendered focus on the concept of *developman*. Following from the discussion on how ni-Vanuatu sex workers' bodies were understood as a constitution of their self, I consider how sex workers are denied personhood, which is gendered in Vanuatu. I also reveal how ni-Vanuatu sex workers are excluded on multiple levels from articulations of human rights. Despite these numerous obstacles, I draw once more on the concept of *developman* in order to argue for the possibilities in establishing future realisations of sex workers' rights in Vanuatu.

5.2 What's love got to do with it?

This section of my discussion will consider sex work in Luganville, firstly, as a part of the broader norms around courtship and relationships, which can blur the boundaries of sexual transactions for sex workers. In light of this analysis, I will then consider modern configurations of ni-Vanuatu masculinities, particularly as they relate to sex, money, and power.

5.2.1 The sexual transaction and the norms of courtship

This section will analyse sex work within broader norms around courtship. In relating the sex industry to broader social patterns, this analysis also exposes different gender roles or trajectories in the context of financial vulnerability in Luganville. I look specifically at the role of middle men and how their role in the sex industry could be seen as an extension of courtship practices. I also consider younger men's involvement in the sex industry in Luganville, revealing how the sex industry seems to have emerged to fill the employment deficit in multiple ways in the urbanising environment of Luganville.

In the research findings chapter above, I discussed middle men, their involvement in sexual transactions in Luganville, and also the networks of other men who are involved in transactions. One of the notable points regarding middle men, which is also revealing of some broader norms around courtship, is the ways in which they began in their role in the sex industry. The middle men I spoke to all began as young school boys who would be sent by other, often older boys to ask out girls in their class. This

experience was shared by other young men, often family members or close friends of a young woman. This pattern of males brokering the sexual relations of women may relate to some areas of Vanuatu where “same-moiety kin members [...] are able to exert control” over young women’s sexual roles (Taylor, 2016, p. 11; see also Taylor, 2005). Young men, therefore, seem to subsume this middle man role as a part of broader social patterns or protocols, where men tend not to approach women directly, but require a closer male acquaintance of the woman to mediate the initial interaction.

The middle man system also exposes the continuity of certain power dynamics amongst men in relation to courtship practices. Where older boys in school ‘send’ their younger peers, for example, older men with money similarly ‘send’ middle men on their behalf as part of sexual transactions. Correspondingly, within the middle man system of the sex industry, higher status middle men employ younger boys from their street, often with the ploy of some reward, to run errands on their behalf. Here a kind of vertical power structure is revealed in relation to the role of middle men in their various forms, and also as an extension of various norms which predate the sex industry. Interestingly, Jolly (1994, 2016) also describes a similar vertical male hierarchy in communities in Vanuatu. Young men on Ambae in the mid-twentieth century, for example, “were the henchmen, violent thugs or sorcerers dispatched by high-ranking elders” (Jolly, 2016, p. 310). The man with the most power and influence then, according to this analysis, is he who has authority in terms of age, connections, and resources to initiate the network of interactions conventionally necessary to engage with a woman. This analysis also speaks to the “long history” of male-male relations in Vanuatu, including throughout colonisation and World War II US military deployment, where women, on the other hand, “were physically and semiotically marginalised” (Jolly, 2016, p. 308).

The younger men who are involved, as peers or family members of sex workers, or as ‘runners’, reveals the extensive network (of men in particular) who are part of the sex industry. As was apparent with the middle men I interviewed, being a middle man to varying extents is part of many young men’s lives potentially from when they are in school. As these young men grow up or leave school they may observe the financial potential in their friendships with female peers, or may be able to reap some benefits

by being involved in the sex business in some other capacity. Young men may also attach themselves to sex workers in order to benefit off their earnings, which I also noted in Section 4.2.4. It is important to consider the integral part the sex industry plays in some young men's lives in Luganville. The monetary transaction (or transacting of other goods, such as kava, alcohol, or marijuana) evolves as an aspect of social practices around dating, and which not only benefit sex workers, but also the vast numbers of unemployed, male 'youths of the street'⁵¹.

This broader conception of sex work as an extension of norms of courtship, and considering the ways in which these norms can develop in ways which produce financial benefits, or other goods for consumption, is perhaps revealing of the future of the sex industry in Luganville. Considering the young population of Vanuatu in general, the reliance on the cash economy in urban settings, and the fact that Luganville's population is growing, though with underemployment alongside this growth, the sex industry in many ways could be seen to fill these employment and financial deficits. However, the sex industry is also highly gendered, resulting in certain vulnerabilities, which I will now discuss.

5.2.2 'Big men', money, and power

Above, I discussed sex work as an extension of norms around courtship, and how men, and often young men who are close relatives or acquaintances of a woman, mediate relations between men and women, and, by extension, clients and sex workers. I also noted above the power structures inherent in the middle man system, as well as how the client is at the head of the vertical power structure as he has greater access to wealth. This section will draw connections between the practice of 'bride price' and the role of 'big men' in exploring what sex work reveals about Melanesian masculinities in the process of urbanisation, with sex work as an aspect of that process. Firstly, I consider how the 'big man' concept relates to sexual transactions in

⁵¹ This phrase was primarily employed by 'Freddie' (middle man, 24 years), particularly in relation to the 'struggles' of these young, vulnerable, urban-dwelling males. The 'youths of the street' 'Freddie' is referring to are the large groups of young, unemployed men, visible in many of the communities in and around Luganville. These groups of young men are often associated with getting drunk (usually of cheaper substances, such as liquid from batteries, homebrew, and alcohol from cheap perfume) and causing trouble.

Luganville's sex industry, before looking at sex, money, and power in relation to modernisation processes in Vanuatu, and what that means in terms of sex workers' wellbeing.

In the literature review of this thesis, I discussed the historical characteristics of 'big men' societies as a way to contextualise masculinity in Vanuatu, and conceptualise "contemporary configurations of masculinities" (Jolly, 2016, p. 309). The concept of 'big men' was brought up during interviews, primarily in relation to clients, who were often men in positions of power in Vanuatu society, namely in politics, the public sector, and private sector business. In 'big men' societies, as discussed, forms of power and influence also go hand in hand with wealth accumulation and exchange, which in modern terms includes money. Political roles and public sector jobs are some of the higher paying positions in the modern economy in Vanuatu, combining notions of 'big man' power with Western influenced financial and political power. Thus, the notion of 'big men' has clearly been adopted and transformed in modern Vanuatu, while still denoting a form of public political power which seems reserved for men as they hold the majority of these positions (Taylor, 2008b; Jolly, 1994; Molisa, 1987).

In analysing 'big men' societies in relation to sex work it is useful to look at the transformations in the role of 'bride price' in *kastom* marriage (Jolly, 2015). In the literature review of this thesis I discussed the practice of 'bride price', and how the increasing inclusion of money and capitalist commodity values in 'bride price' payments has distorted the practice and its meaning (Jolly, 2015). These transitions in the practice and meaning of 'bride price' are an example of the gendered nature of development, where ni-Vanuatu men have arbitrated and controlled contact with, and comprehension of commodities and capitalist economics (Jolly, 1994). The practice of 'bride price' entails a complex oscillation in meaning between gift and commodity exchange, with the initiator of the transaction, namely the man, having the deciding power over its conception (Jolly, 2015). As Jolly (1994, p. 137-138) argues: "by paying for a wife in cash, the transaction is rendered more akin to buying alienable commodities in a store [...which] tends to diminish the claims of a woman's natal kin and to de-emphasise the continuing character of debts for maternity." One might add that the impact of indigenised Christian gendered assumptions of the domesticity of

wives takes for granted women's 'place' in the home, her maternal role, and her husband's "conjugal rights to sex and babies" (Jolly, 2001, p. 196).

The role of capitalist commodity values, and money as an introduced symbol of competitive advantage and male prestige, may be argued to have put weight on the conception of 'bride price' as commodity transaction, and it is possible that this notion may be extended to transactions within the sex industry. Accordingly, the client, as the instigator of the transaction, and with financial authority, decides how the sexual transaction is to be comprehended: as a gift/compensation-like payment, or a commodity transaction. Both, however, may be problematic for ni-Vanuatu sex workers. The former may link to the obligation elements of conjugal relations Vanuatu, and the latter to satisfaction, linking to male entitlement over sexual fulfilment which denotes going 'skin-to-skin' and overlooking sexual consent.

Under this analysis, the assuredness with which sex workers and middle men alike spoke of the monetary exchange during sexual transactions as binding becomes comprehensible. This analysis also provides a gendered framework from which sex work may be understood within the urbanising and industrialising context of Luganville. Of course, the link made here between sex work, 'big men', and the practice of 'bride price' is also problematic from the perspective of sex workers' SRHR, as the exchange of money or goods by the client may entail a sense of ownership and control on the part of the client. Furthermore, under the 'big man' analogy, the exchange itself may be conceived as an expression of the client's masculinity and an embodiment of the power associated with the achievement of contemporary formations of 'big manship'. This conception again exposes some deep-seated inequities underpinning the plethora of abuses faced by sex workers. I will now discuss the issue of rights as they relate to sex work in Luganville against the backdrop of the above analysis of courtship and 'big man' masculinities in urban Vanuatu life.

5.3 What've rights got to do with it?

This section is central in responding to the core concerns of this thesis of analysing rights, and especially sexual and reproductive health rights, in the context of the sex industry in Luganville. I begin by exploring first how sex workers, and others,

comprehend themselves in ways that inform their conceptions of rights. I relate this section of the discussion to 'body work' and, in particular, conceptions of the ways in which the body is understood to constitute the self. This analysis will reveal the extent to which ni-Vanuatu sex workers are marginalised and disempowered by the way their body/selves are perceived. Following this, I consider more specifically the 'agential body', which relates to the extent to which sex workers can exercise agency during transactions. This deeper analysis of ni-Vanuatu sex workers' body/selves reveals the barriers to them in claiming their rights and protecting their wellbeing.

I then discuss sex work in relation to gender, rights and development, drawing on literature on transnational feminism discussed in Chapter 2 in order to consider how ni-Vanuatu sex workers' rights may be discussed and realised. I then argue that the route to realising the SRHR of sex workers in Vanuatu entails a relational process, where people come to know and understand their rights from within the various positions they occupy, which are intimately tied to aspects of their social, spiritual, cultural, gendered, economic lives and selves.

5.3.1 'I stap long blad' ('It's in the blood'): Perceptions of the relation of sex work to the self

This section builds on the theory of 'body work' discussed in the literature review of this thesis, analysing how the bodies of Luganville-based ni-Vanuatu sex workers were conceived as a constitution of their selves. According to this analysis, as will be discussed, sex workers are disempowered at almost every level of how their body/selves are conceived, to the extent that they have been 'de-selfed'. This disempowerment and undermining of their personhood links inextricably to the limited ability sex workers have to exercise agency during transactions and, thus, claim their rights.

The heading of this section includes a phrase that was used, alongside others of a similar vein, throughout interviews which exposes a perception that sex work was somehow innate to women who engage in this form of labour; that it is 'in their blood'. Another common phrase that was employed, by a range of interviewees, was that sex workers were 'selling themselves' in the process of the sexual transaction. This

perception follows from other notions which were expressed about the activity of sex work being an essential part of who sex workers are. Furthermore, it was also noted throughout interviews that sex work can, as 'John' (middle man, 34 years) put it, "get used to your blood", so it can also *become* a part of someone via other influences, for example peer groups, and through the irresistibility of money. Similarly, 'Tim' (ex-boyfriend of a sex worker, 24 years) stated that sex workers "become infected with it [sex work]; they can't control themselves" which explicitly undermines any conception of sex workers' agency. This indicates a widely held gendered assumption that, particularly for women, sex work is either inborn, or can emerge as an essential part of who they are, including if they engage in sex work due to financial vulnerability.

In my literature review, I discussed different notions of how the body can be conceived as a constitution of the self, and how those different conceptions influence the wellbeing of sex workers. The ways in which sex workers' body/selves are conceived links to broader perceptions of their personhood, which relates inextricably to their rights as persons being realised. Thus, a deeper analysis of the ways in which ni-Vanuatu sex workers' bodies are conceived as a constitution of their self is tied intimately to my core question of sex workers' ability to claim their rights. There are six ways in which the body may be understood to constitute the self: as 'text', as an 'essentialised body', as a 'commodified body', as a 'socialised body', as a 'body-without-organs', and as an 'agential body'. Each conception will be considered in relation to ni-Vanuatu sex workers. My analysis below ultimately exposes the extent to which ni-Vanuatu sex workers have been 'de-selfed', or divested of personhood in the ways in which their body/selves have been constructed.

The discursive conception of sex work being 'in the blood' of ni-Vanuatu sex workers relates to the 'body as text', or how the body is understood as a constitution of the self via 'text' or discourse about the body. Women's bodies have a history of being discursively constructed in Vanuatu in relation to their mobility being equated with promiscuity and prostitution, which is embodied in the stigmatising phrase 'woman blong rod' ('woman of the road'). In Chapter 2 I mentioned Jolly's (1994) account of men in South Pentecost impeding their women from learning Bislama for fear that they would become prostitutes. This connection between ni-Vanuatu women's

mobility and their sexual deviance has been made elsewhere by ni-Vanuatu men, European explorers and those involved in the migration of ni-Vanuatu for work on plantations (see Jolly, 1987). For instance, while the male majority who have made up migrant labour forces were seen overall to be motivated by “a potent brew of the enticements of the exotic and the frustrations of the familiar”, for the minority of ni-Vanuatu women who left for work on plantations the “emphasis was on their status as sexual beings” (Jolly, 1987, p. 124). This emphasis reveals long held assumptions of ni-Vanuatu women who are mobile and have contact with foreign influences as *sexual beings*, that is, their sexual deviance is perceived to be innate to who they are. Even though there is evidence that ni-Vanuatu women labourers’ sexual relations with ni-Vanuatu and European men is “more suggestive of rape than prostitution” (Jolly, 1987, p. 126), the discursive construction of ni-Vanuatu women labourers seems to overwhelmingly be devised by men (ni-Vanuatu and European alike) in a reductionist, sexualising manner. This also suggests a long history of blurring the lines between sex work and rape, which is extremely problematic for the recognition of sex workers’ sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to consensual sex.

In relating this discursive construction of sex workers to the ‘essentialised’ bodies of women in Vanuatu, we gain a complex picture of the multiple ways in which sex workers are “de-selfed” (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 126), or divested of (gendered) personhood. The ‘essentialised bodies’ of women in Vanuatu are arguably an amalgamation of historical taboos associated particularly with their reproductive blood, and Christian notions of feminine modesty, maternity and domesticity. The former conception’s influence on the essential body/self of ni-Vanuatu women is interesting to consider alongside the notion that sex work is ‘in the blood’ of sex workers. Given beliefs around the potency of blood associated with women’s reproductive bodies, which is thought to cause illness in men, this is problematic when we consider the burden of responsibility for sexual and reproductive health. As Jolly (2001, p. 198) argues:

Women are still feared as a source of pollution, not just the pollution of their reproductive bodies but of introduced diseases (especially venereal diseases and HIV/AIDS) and the heat and dirt of money.

It was revealed in the findings chapter of this thesis that clients rarely accepted the use of condoms, and, furthermore, sex workers were explicitly blamed for the spread of STIs/HIV. Perhaps this conviction is linked to the belief that transmissible illnesses are innate to women's reproductive bodies. Furthermore, as sex work was seen to 'infect' the blood of the women who undertake this work, STIs/HIV could be perceived as the subsequent illnesses which can be passed onto male clients. In relation to the 'essentialised body' informed by Christianity, sex workers are more blatantly in opposition to this formation. I will return to this issue in the following section in relation to ni-Vanuatu women referencing Christian texts and beliefs to promote their rights (Jolly, 2005), which is an important rights-claiming process, but one which excludes sex workers.

The 'commodified body' is complex in its relationship to perceptions of sex workers' bodies as a constitution of their selves during transactions, and relates to the incursion of wage labour and capitalist perceptions of individual possession in Vanuatu. While the perception of the 'gift' of sexual pleasure in the exchange process was mentioned (discussed further below), in this research interviewees mostly talked about sex workers as 'selling themselves', alongside similar phrases such as 'selem ass' ('sell your ass') and 'selem bodi' ('sell your body'). In this way, while the gift economy (Jolly, 2015; Servy, 2014) complicates understandings of what exchange processes mean, and may still play a role to varying extents in exchanges of sex for money/goods, ni-Vanuatu sex workers seemed to be predominantly associated with commercial transactions, with their bodies as objects of trade. This understanding of sex workers as commodified bodies impacts their ability to claim their rights to the extent that, according to interviewees, police will no longer take action for violence against sex workers once money (or other goods) has been given.

In addition, thinking about ni-Vanuatu sex workers in terms of the 'socialised body' reveals broader issues relating to the gendered elements of their social environment, and their position within it. Sex workers may also build an understanding of themselves via social interactions informed by social hierarchies and power relations. Vanuatu has a long history of male-male relations, including in exchanges of wealth, as discussed elsewhere in thesis. The middle man structure of the sex industry, along with

perceptions of clients as 'big men,' reveals a continuity of these male-male relations and exchanges of goods and wealth. Here men are either in positions of already assumed power, or potential power, as with grade-taking in 'big man' societies. Female sex workers, on the other hand, seem to mostly be ascribed status by male clients (i.e. by being in high demand), while they have limited control over the wealth for exchange and the terms and conditions of transactions. So, sex workers' social interactions with middle men and clients seems to mostly be disempowering, their sense of agency encompassed by their socially constituted sexuality which is negotiated primarily by these men (Wardlow, 2006). A sense of social stigma is also likely brought about via sex workers' often violent encounters with wives of clients whose social status is likely more reflective of gender norms associated with 'good' women (Jolly, 2001).

The 'body-without-organs' (BwO) relates to the pleasure, fantasy and desire aspects of sexual interactions as part of transactions, and how these aspects inform how sex workers are conceived, and how they think about themselves. I argued in the literature review to this thesis that the BwO is also tied to socially informed ideals and manifestations of desires, which are gendered. Thus, the BwO here relates to 'contemporary configurations of masculinities', where money is the medium by which men can exercise authority and express virility (Jolly, 2016), which could also underpin their desire to pay for sex, as well as how the transaction unfolds. The phrase used by multiple participants of clients 'using their bodies' also reveals how sex workers may think about themselves in relation to sexual pleasure as a socially constituted male entitlement. Some of the sex workers I interviewed, however, also derived sexual pleasure from interactions with clients, as mentioned in Chapter 4. Yet, others found sex with clients rough, rushed and painful, and relied somewhat on alcohol or kava to cope with sexual transactions, or, as Wolkowitz (2006) refers, as a 'technique of the self'.

All of the ways in which ni-Vanuatu sex workers' bodies were understood as a constitution of their self are problematic as they essentially deny the personhood of sex workers. By denying the personhood of sex workers, their rights as persons may be overlooked. While the economic vulnerability of sex workers was also acknowledged

during interviews, which relates also to 'body work' where the body can become a financial "safety net" (Dewey, 2011, p. 121), the above discussion reveals troubling perceptions of sex workers. Ni-Vanuatu sex workers are caught in the crossroad of being contrary to the essentialist gendered paradigms of ni-Vanuatu women, and being bound to social norms and male fantasies related to masculine virility and capitalist economics. Sex workers' own comprehension of themselves, therefore, as they relate to these dominant values and paradigms is also complex, which I discuss below, and which also relates to how they understand, articulate, and are able to assert their rights.

In the following section I discuss the final way in which the body is understood to constitute the self, namely as an 'agential body'. The 'agential body' refers to the agency sex workers exercise in order to protect themselves, and their relationship with themselves. The extent to which they are able to achieve levels of self-preservation is also tied somewhat to the extent to which they are able to establish boundaries around their interactions with clients. As noted in the above literature review, the 'agential body', therefore, is concerned with the intimate negotiations of power between sex workers and clients throughout transactions. This leads us onto the next section of the discussion which concerns how the sex workers themselves conceived of their involvement in sex work, often in rather complex ways.

5.3.2 'I spoil their thoughts': A complex analysis of sex workers' agency in Luganville

This section focuses on the complex perceptions sex workers had about themselves. I consider the extent to which ni-Vanuatu sex workers may be perceived as 'agential' bodies, or can "use their bodies to defend themselves" as agents (Wolkowitz, 2006, p. 138). The core question this section addresses is: what are sex workers experiences of claiming their rights, or exercising their agency in relation to decisions about their wellbeing. I will also discuss how gender paradigms are internalised by sex workers in ways that also limit their conceptualisation of their rights and encompass their agency.

From the framework of the 'agential' body, the ni-Vanuatu sex workers I spoke to demonstrated various 'techniques of the self' (Wolkowitz, 2006). The first is in the

covert manner in which they undertake their income earning activities, as by limiting who has knowledge of their involvement in sex work, they are only associated with sex work by a small number of people. There were also examples given of sex workers negotiating condom use, which represent instances where they have attempted to assert boundaries around physical access to their bodies (Brewis & Linstead, 2000). Several sex workers, for example, said they made the use of condoms a condition of the sexual transaction, and some used other rhetoric as well, such as insulting the client's level of schooling if he said he still did not want to use one. Using the money earned from sex work to purchase personal luxury items and/or household necessities could also be seen as providing some opportunity to exercise agency, in both a socially encompassed, and an individualist sense. Additionally, one interviewee explicitly stated that she insisted that the transaction not be rushed so that she also may derive enjoyment out of the sexual intercourse. In using the bodily interaction to gain sexual pleasure, this could be seen as a process of self-affirmation. We may concede from this that sexual health knowledge and services, free and private access to condoms, and negotiation skills are some foundational elements for sex workers to claim their rights. However, there were limits to the extent to which sex workers could exercise agency during transactions, and these limits have led to some horrific instances of abuse. Two key examples where sex workers were unable to set their own limits during interactions with clients were 'Anne's' (FSW, 37 years) story of forced pregnancy, and 'Susan's' (FSW, 20 years) story about her friend who was forced into a marriage with a client. The limits to sex workers exercising their agency was also much broader, including with regards to condom use, where sex workers may face violence or the loss of a transaction, and deception over payments. Here the relationship between money and power has meant that Luganville-based sex workers have a significantly limited ability to manage the boundaries around their interactions with clients, and claim their sexual and reproductive health rights.

In the heading to this section, I included a quote by 'Anne' (FSW, 37 years) which encapsulates a notion held by several interviewees regarding the responsibility they hold in relation to male sexuality. There was a view that emerged that men are helpless when it comes to their sexual urges, thus, to use 'Mary's' (FSW, 17 years)

words, “us women, we must do something to make him feel good.” There was a perception that sexual satisfaction was something that needed to be provided, and that, for the women I spoke to in particular, they had to display a certain amount of humility in the face of the sexual entitlement of the men they interacted with (and even in response to forms of violence). A couple of participants, for instance, spoke about how their vaginas ‘made men crazy’, thus in these men’s state of ‘craze’ their accountability during the interaction disappeared. Several sex workers also spoke of clients ‘using their bodies’, which similarly reduces their sense of agency, revealing a notion which is more in line with the conception of sex workers ‘selling themselves’. As the quote by ‘Anne’ (FSW, 37 years) above states, *she* spoils their thoughts; it is her responsibility that men cannot control themselves or their sexuality.

A sense of internalised humiliation may be seen as sex workers try and make sense of their engagement in sex work whilst self-consciously being situated outside of gender norms. Furthermore, ni-Vanuatu sex workers may be perceived as embodiments of long held male social and moral fears over women’s mobility and access to modernity meaning they “must perforce become ‘prostitutes’” (Jolly, 1987, p. 127). Sex workers do not fit the dominant patriarchal notions of *kastom* and Christian women, thereby perhaps bringing about feelings of inferiority, or not being worthy of equivalent levels of treatment. As the above examples reveal, there was a self-blaming element to my discussions with sex workers. Yet, on an even more complex level, there was also some element of pride or conviction in the way they related to, or spoke about male sexuality. Being associated with male sexual satisfaction could entail a positive sense of identifying with, and contributing to those dominant social constructs regarding sexuality which relates to agency in a relational sense.

Relational agency is an important point to touch on further, as this point is pertinent in understanding how, in Vanuatu, agency is not separable from the gendered paradigms which often encompass it (Wardlow, 2006), relating back to the ‘socialised body’. Taylor (2016) argues that in Vanuatu agency exists within a “broader discursive context by which men express hegemonic ideals of gendered agency, such that entails curtailing the agency of women, their sexual agency especially” often via “threat of physical, social, or moral retribution” (p. 2). This hegemonic gendered notion of

agency, where men are positioned more positively as negotiating ‘modern’ versus Christian/*kastom* values and women tend to assume a more “invidious positioning” (Taylor, 2016, p. 4), seems to have had an adverse effect on sex workers’ sense of self and agency. This analysis reveals the complexity of sex workers’ agency, especially insofar as they are patriarchal symbols of the extremities of female sexual agency and mobility. Ni-Vanuatuan sex workers are entangled with their position in relation to patriarchal discourses in terms of how they make sense of what they do, which is significant in considering both their understanding of, and ability to claim their rights.

Below I discuss rights in relation to the broader context of gender and development, arguing how sex work ultimately exposes the core of the gender, power, and rights nexus in developing contexts.

5.3.3 ‘Like, we adopt the foreign attitudes’: Sex work, rights, and development

In this section I discuss the points analysed above in relation to a broader consideration of the concept of development, and how sex work in many ways exposes some of the key tensions relating to gender, power, and rights in Vanuatu. I will start by discussing the antagonistic relationship between life in town, which denotes foreignness and dependency on the cash economy, and village life, which denotes respect for *kastom*, or traditional ways, including Christianity. I will then discuss this antagonism in relation to ‘big men’ identities, considering the issue of gender and power in modernising environments, such as Luganville. Finally, I will consider how rights may be conceived in this environment, arguing from the perspective of, as I have conceptualised, gender and development.

I have mentioned elsewhere in this thesis the perception of life in town versus rural, village life, and the uneasy assumptions associated with the former, as opposed to the sense of nostalgia, and rootedness associated with the latter. This perception is problematic when it comes to sex workers, and a consideration of their rights. Sex workers seem in many ways to be positioned at the crux of the problematizing of modernity; they are urban dwellers, who are reliant on the cash economy, and are deemed as loose women who disrupt the ‘*rod blong woman*’, thereby in many ways subverting gender norms, which can be observed by female sex workers frequently

wearing trousers and shorts. Sex work, then, seems to be both at the heart of the gender/power nexus, and the unique tensions and oscillations between tradition and modernity, or village and town life.

The ways in which sex workers disrupt the '*rod blond woman*' are twofold: firstly, in relation to women's productive and reproductive duties as part of complex communal life in Vanuatu, and, secondly, in the disassociation of their labour from the money gained via sex work. The '*rod blond woman*' reveals women's agency in Vanuatu as encompassed by their social and kinship roles in relation to producing goods for exchange and consumption, and the continuity of the family line (Wardlow, 2006). However, this productive and reproductive duty towards the male partner and his kin becomes more complex in the case of sex work, which can be seen in 'Anne's' (FSW, 37 years) story of reproductive coercion. Sex work, conversely, is productive only for the sex worker, while the client gains nothing, at least in capitalist, or accumulative terms. Moreover, there is a clear divide here between sexual pleasure and procreation, where the former is the entire basis for the interaction, with no lingering, or overriding purpose. Sex workers may, therefore, be perceived as rupture in the most fundamental sense, as their agency attempts to move beyond being solely defined by their social and reproductive duties (Wardlow, 2006).

Furthermore, in subsistence communities, and during ceremonial exchanges and grade-taking rituals, women may be ascribed "moral power deriving from the fact that they perform more of the daily labour in herding" (Jolly, 1994, p. 73), even if their labour becomes 'eclipsed' during male-male exchanges. Town life, on the other hand, is notable for its cash-dependant economic system which creates an "increasing disembodiment of wealth from its origins in production" (Jolly, 1991, p. 77); money does not have obvious ties to its producers. According to this analysis, sex workers are not necessarily even ascribed any 'moral power' over the transacting of money or goods for sexual pleasure, as the money used in the exchange process is disassociated from sex workers who have had no role in its production. However, the potential value which may be attributed to sexual pleasure is another key determinant in how the sexual transactions may be understood, and is worth considering.

The extent to which sexual pleasure is observed to be a valuable, or 'gift' which is the result of a labour performed by sex workers, thus ascribing them moral power or worth, seems to be a point of contention, and is a decision which seems to be under the ownership of the client. In Section 4.4.1 in my discussion of sex work and 'life in town', I quoted a passage of dialogue from 'John' (middle man, 34 years) explaining the different perceptions of money given in exchange for sex in villages versus town, where the former is more like a gift and the latter a business transaction. This reveals a gendered divide in perceptions of the role of money in sexual relations. Relating back to the 'commodified' body, where sex workers are part of the business-like sex industry of town, and (to quote 'John' again) they "prepare their vaginas" accordingly, it seems that commodity perceptions take precedence. In the village, on the other hand, the exchange of money for the 'gift' of sexual pleasure is "up to your heart". I hypothesise that this latter perception is due to the view that rural areas are less corrupted by the harsh, money-driven, and 'foreign' ways of town, a view which is extended to the perceptions of women who frequent these spaces. Thus, just as women more generally in Vanuatu are perceived along the divisive gendered lines of either 'good' *kastom* and Christian women, or as 'women of the road', the interpretation of money as a part of sexual liaisons may similarly be perceived in dichotomous terms depending on the woman who is involved in the exchange or transaction. Notably, though, it is the male who decides how the transaction will be comprehended.

The tensions the sex industry exposes in relation to the values attached to *kastom* and Christianity, and those attached to modernity and town life, links to the gendered personhood of ni-Vanuatu sex workers. As Taylor and Morgain (2015) explain, "[p]ersonhood [in Vanuatu] is [...] conceptualised as 'engendered' in both senses of the word: as fundamentally entangled with social codes of gender, and as brought forth through specific contexts, moments, practices, and experiences" (p. 2). The sex industry, as discussed elsewhere, is deeply intertwined with 'social codes of gender', yet it may also be seen to be a context in which the gendered personhood of clients may be 'brought forth'. The sexual transaction, for men, may be an expression of modern configurations of masculinity; namely, of masculine virility, of prestige due to

the power accrued by having money at one's disposal (mingled with capitalist notions of possession and satisfaction), as well as the continuity of patriarchal socio-political power and male-male negotiations of wealth. For sex workers, on the other hand, and as discussed in Section 5.3.1, they are 'de-selfed' throughout sexual transactions, their (gendered) personhood unrecognised as they are conceived as lacking in the core constituents which form women as persons. In this way, (masculine) personhood may be 'brought forth' in the context of sexual transactions as part of ni-Vanuatu males' ability to negotiate social and moral codes of gender in Vanuatu. However, female sex workers' agency remains encompassed by preconceived gender paradigms, from which they are inherently disqualified. Thus, FSW's personhood, rather than being 'brought forth' during sexual transactions, seems to be impulsively overlooked, thereby bringing about significant limits to their ability to exercise their rights as persons.

Here the discussion relates to the concept of gender and development, or the distinctive ways in which ni-Vanuatu men arbitrate and negotiate emergent practices and commodities in particularly gendered ways. The sex industry is not only internally gendered, as men and women seem to follow different trajectories within the business, but also depends on the prescribed discursive power of 'big men' in terms of how the transaction is understood and treated. Relatively speaking, sex workers are able to exert little authority in terms of how the transaction is comprehended and managed. When a client decides that his payment means that the sex worker is indebted to him in terms of sexual satisfaction, and even ongoing rights to sex and, in extreme cases, babies, sex workers have a limited ability to contest these imposed conditions. Sex workers' position on the legal peripheries, and their defiance in relation to *kastom* law where they may face fines, or, in some cases, violence, entail that they are even more vulnerable as they have no recourse to justice in instances where they have been exposed to abuse.

The sex industry in Luganville exposes many tensions in relation to gender and power in Vanuatu, and the (gendered) values attached to adherence to indigenised Christianity and *kastom*, versus the corrupt, foreign forces of modernity. In relation to the perception of rights, particularly women's rights, in Vanuatu, in Section 2.6 I

referred to Taylor's (2008b) analysis of the Violence Against Men (VAM) group erected in Luganville, focussing on the ways in which gender and power paradigms have brought about obstacles in terms of engaging with women's rights. When contemplated within the vertical power structure of male authority, it has been perceived that the elevation of women's rights is at the expense of men's rights, with the aim of eventually dominating and controlling men thereby disrupting the 'natural' order of things. However, it is important to consider how ni-Vanuatu women have contemplated and discussed their rights, before analysing what these perceptions mean in relation to realising sex workers' human rights.

Here I refer back to literature on transnational feminism. Transnational feminism is a framework which maintains the tension between broader trans-border inequities and the importance of universal human rights, and the multiplicity of legitimate experiences and agency which exist within borders, including the ways in which people appeal to universal human rights principles. As the previous discussion on VAM reveals, appeals to secular notions of human rights has proved ineffective, and even exacerbated various sex antagonisms. Rather, women's rights dialogues in Vanuatu have often made appeals to Christian values. To quote Jolly (2005), "a Christian narrative of emancipation is more compelling than a rational vision of development" for Pacific women, and appeals for the realisation of women's rights are thus made "to God, in their hopes for a better life for their daughters" (p. 154). From a transnational feminist perspective, ni-Vanuatu women's articulation of their universal rights is a reflection of what they find to be uplifting, empowering, and inspiring, including in relation of women's Christian groups which provide a platform for women's voices and socio-political engagement (Douglas, 2002). Furthermore, appealing to Christianity in an articulation of human rights is to refer to a common ground amongst ni-Vanuatu in terms of beliefs and values.

However, indigenised Christianity is also gendered. The essentialised 'good woman' is often "now modelled on the Christian ideal of wife and mother (hardworking, modest, and faithful as in the past)" as opposed to 'the bad woman' who "is lazy, immodest, and unfaithful" (Jolly, 2001, p. 198). Above I discussed how this essentialised perception of ni-Vanuatu women has rendered sex workers as 'de-selfed', or, in other

words, lacking in the essential nature of being a woman. Thus, ni-Vanuatu women's reference to Christianity in articulating their human rights seems to inherently exclude sex workers from this appeal. Ni-Vanuatu sex workers seem to be on the peripheries, if not overtly excluded from both more educated urban women's articulations of human rights which make appeals to Christian values, and from dialogues about rural women of *kastom*, who in many ways are still depicted as being proper representations of ni-Vanuatu women (Jolly, 2005).

So, how might ni-Vanuatu sex workers' rights be contemplated, articulated and claimed by them? Ultimately, sex work is a productive labour, and it needs to be considered from the context where collectivity takes precedence over notions of the individual self (Jolly, 2000). What the above reveals are the multiplicity of obstacles present in articulating and realising sex workers' rights in Vanuatu as ni-Vanuatu sex workers are marginalised on many levels which relate back to the gender/power nexus. However, as previously conceptualised, tradition refers to 'distinctive ways of changing.' While notions of gender and power underpin social, political, and cultural movements and change, the process of development is in general one of relational negotiations of obligations. Jolly (2000) cites a passage of text from a brochure produced by the Vanuatu Women's Centre for a conference on Violence in the Family in Vanuatu in 1994:

Attitudes to violence, like culture, is not static [sic]. They depend on our needs and our interpretations of what we want to be, how we want to be and how we get there. To be static is to be dead. (p. 134)

Accordingly, when it comes to negotiating rights, and sexual and reproductive rights in the sex industry in particular, this has to be a relational and inclusive process; a top-down approach which aims at disrupting power structures could end up being counter-productive, and "alienating the very local men they are trying to influence and change." (Jolly, 2000, 133). An articulation of sex workers' rights which appeals to their wellbeing, and how their wellbeing is currently being significantly compromised, may bring about "renewed collective values in accord with the values of non-violence and human rights" (Jolly, 2000, p. 134). This process does not entail rejecting *kastom* and indigenised Christianity outright, but rather it involves negotiating and re-articulating

some of the values attached to those conceptual structures in ways which support sex workers' position.

Establishing a clear distinction between sex workers and the labour they perform also seems to be a key factor in recognising their rights, in order to curtail such de-humanising conceptions of them as corrupt versions of women who are at the sexual disposal of men via monetary transactions. Establishing this distinction would likely entail supporting sex workers' "self-recognition as workers" (Kabeer, Milward & Sudarshan, 2013, p. 250). This process of developing sex workers' social- and self-recognition as workers with rights would be complex, and one which may involve sex workers finding ways to "choreograph actions around recognised cultural symbols and references to subvert or appropriate their meaning" (Kabeer, Milward & Sudarshan, 2013, p. 254). Thus, ni-Vanuatu sex workers need to be recognised in relation to their multiple capacities and roles, for example as mothers, as home makers, as Christians, and as women and men of *kastom*. This recognition of sex workers in their multiple capacities links back to agency as socially encompassed in Vanuatu, described above.

Sex workers need to be perceived as agents within the exchange process, with the ability to make decisions related to their health and wellbeing. This will take time, and should be seen as a process where rights refer not only to external outputs of decreased STI/HIV transmissions and accounts of abuse, but also refers to internal dimensions of identity and personhood. These internal dimensions of rights entail shifting configurations of autonomous and relational "forms and expressions of gendered person[s] [...] through such ongoing flows and entanglements" (Taylor & Morgain, 2015, p. 2) indicative of *developman*.

5.4 Summary

My discussion has covered the larger themes of gender, power, and rights within the context of *developman*. Initially I discussed sex work as an extension of courtship practices, focussing on the roles and hierarchies involved in the middle man system. This discussion also revealed the different trajectories of men and women in the context of financial vulnerability brought about by urbanisation. I then explored

connections between assumptions of power on the part of clients and the idea of 'big men,' and the associated codes of prestige brought about via Western influences.

In the second half of my discussion I drew on literature on 'body work' in order to conceptualise how ni-Vanuatu sex workers' bodies were conceived as a constitution of their self. I argued that ni-Vanuatu sex workers' rights are compromised by both the perception of sex work as essential to their being, and their opposition to gender paradigms and the essentialised 'good' woman, thus rendering them as 'de-selfed'. Furthermore, capitalist notions of commodities reinforce the process by which ni-Vanuatu sex workers have been 'de-selfed' as they are understood literally as objects of trade. All of these factors significantly impact sex workers' ability to have their rights as persons recognised.

I then discussed sex workers' agency further to reveal the essentially problematic environment for Luganville sex workers claiming their rights. While some sex workers I spoke to gave examples of how they had negotiated the conditions of transactions, there were substantial limits to the extent of their agency, as evidenced in the significant amount of abuses they had faced. Furthermore, the sense of humiliation amongst sex workers, brought about by their status being contrary to feminine social and moral norms, was disempowering to the extent that some sex workers have internalised blame for abuses made against them.

I then linked the above ideas more broadly to my conceptualisation of GAD, namely gender and development, where the process of mediating and interpreting introduced commodities and ways in Vanuatu has been largely controlled by men. I argued that women's agency in Vanuatu is encompassed by underpinning gender paradigms (Wardlow, 2006), which ultimately obscures the (gendered) personhood of sex workers. Ni-Vanuatu sex workers are presently excluded from 'insular notions of *kastom*', where women are understood in relation to their place within complex communal life in Vanuatu, and Christian notions of the modest, faithful, domesticated wife. Furthermore, ni-Vanuatu sex workers are also excluded from modern, educated ni-Vanuatu women's appeals to Christian values in their articulation of the human rights.

However, this multifaceted exclusion of sex workers does not rule them out from future articulations of human rights in Vanuatu. I suggest that focussing on dialogues based on sex workers' wellbeing, and current ways in which their wellbeing is being compromised, might assist in establishing collective values which are more accommodating of sex workers. Part of this process will also involve reconstructing perceptions of sex workers as workers separable from the sexual labour they perform. Establishing self- and social-recognition of sex workers as workers entails that they are considered as persons whose wellbeing ought to be recognised. This process would entail new negotiations and shifting configurations of currently marginalising gender paradigms in order that the (re-)gendered personhood of sex workers may be realised.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis set out to understand the experiences of ni-Vanuatu sex workers in Luganville, not only exploring the technicalities of the sex work industry in the urbanising township of Luganville, but also focussing on sex workers' ability to claim their sexual and reproductive health rights. I spoke to sex workers, both male and female, an ex-sex worker, middle men, a client, and an ex-boyfriend of a local sex worker to hear their stories, perceptions, and experiences of sex work, and the sex work industry. These frequently honest, and in-depth discussions, as described in Chapter 4 of this thesis, provided important insight into the lives and wellbeing of people who exchange sexual acts for money/goods in Luganville, Vanuatu.

Literature on gender and development, transnational feminism, and 'body work' underpin this thesis. From there I contextualised gender, development (or *developman*), and the concept of women's rights in Vanuatu, and then in relation to sex work in particular. This body of literature informed my critical engagement with the deeper meanings and implications of the sex work industry, and sex workers' experiences.

The sex work industry in Luganville is both positioned at a point of divergence from value norms around gender and power, and is deeply influenced by them. My findings and discussion reveal how the sex work industry of Luganville is internally gendered, as men and women seem to largely occupy different roles within exchange processes. In exploring my question about the technicalities of the sex work industry, as well as uncovering the day-to-day proceedings of exchanges, I discovered the different male roles (e.g. clients, middle men, runners) within transactions. These different male roles, which are often determined by an individual's level of economic vulnerability and social connections, in many ways reproduce masculine power hierarchies, and norms around courtship in Vanuatu which pre-date the sex work industry.

Women's roles within the sex work industry are, on the other hand, largely limited to that of 'sex worker', yet their role is similarly influenced by gender norms and paradigms in Vanuatu. While women may become involved with sex work for similar

reasons as middle men and runners, namely due to financial need, or as part of engaging in the social life of town, their ability to exercise agency was severely limited.

The main concern of this thesis was the extent to which ni-Vanuatu sex workers could claim their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). The word *claim* denotes sex workers' level of agency in relation to decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing, and, as I have stated, my research found their ability to exercise agency to be restricted. I argued that the ways in which ni-Vanuatu sex workers' bodies were understood to constitute their selves (Wolkowitz, 2002), and the position of sex workers within the process of gender and development have ultimately rendered sex workers 'de-selfed', or lacking personhood which is gendered in Vanuatu.

Gender and development refers to the ways in which men continue to negotiate and control introduced practices, beliefs, and 'ways', including discourses related to gender norms, and the enactment of those norms in specific contexts (Taylor & Morgain, 2015). I have argued that men in Vanuatu are able to both justify their positions of power within the sex work industry as continuity of male authority across village, Christian, and state political arenas, and enact modern configurations of masculinity during transactions. Women, on the other hand, remain confined to perceptions of 'good' women of *kastom* and the church, and who enact femininity via a mixture of Christian modesty and domesticity, and their productive and reproductive duties to the clan. During exchanges as part of the sex work industry, however, female sex workers do not fit these feminine paradigms, thus their gendered personhood cannot be brought forth in this context. Overall, I argued that the complex process by which ni-Vanuatu sex workers are rendered as lacking in (gendered) personhood, or are 'de-selfed', underpins their limited ability to exercise agency, and thus claim their SRHR.

Ultimately, this thesis rejects essentialist or moralising rhetoric about the sex industry, arguing instead from a position of deep engagement with underpinning paradigms, understandings, and articulations of gender, power, and rights as fundamental dynamics behind the maltreatment of sex workers.

This research provides a deep analysis of sex work in Vanuatu, thus can be seen as groundwork for subsequent work on the sex industry in Vanuatu, and further afield,

particularly in terms of unpacking sex industries along gendered lines. Furthermore, this thesis may be seen as providing an important analysis of the centrality of the sex work industry in exposing broader contentions in relation to gender, power, rights, and agency in the context of *developman*.

6.1 Sex work and *developman*: exposing the gender, power, and rights nexus

Marginalised populations, such as sex workers, expose in more stark ways the gender, power, and rights nexus at the heart of *developman*. The sex work industry is both a product of capitalist development shortfalls, such as rapid urbanisation and underemployment, and is intimately associated with peoples' processes of grappling with complex paradigms regarding sex, sexuality, gender, and rights in changing environments. As sex workers are situated on the social, moral, gendered, and legal peripheries, their position may expose some of the deeper tensions and oscillations between these dynamics. However, sex workers' position also exacerbates certain vulnerabilities and inequalities. The complex undercurrents of gender and power in societies adapting to, and negotiating identities within urban life underpins the maltreatment faced by sex workers.

As sex workers are a part of urban development, they ought to be included in dialogues about development, however, not just as an 'at risk' population, even though their wellbeing needs to be a central consideration. Not only do sex workers need to be considered as workers, as rights holders, and as agents, but also as people with important insights and knowledge about, as I have conceptualised, gender and *developman*, or the distinctive ways in which communities change along gendered lines. Thus, sex workers' levels of agency not only reveals the extent to which they can claim their rights during interactions with clients, but also underlying gendered prejudices which disadvantage people who do not fit those paradigms to the extent that they face considerable abuse and discrimination.

The findings of this thesis, and the people whose stories and experiences are at its core, suggest the importance of a more sustained engagement with sex workers in international development research and praxis. Furthermore, this thesis' analysis and

profound unpacking of sex workers' conditions, which are intricately woven with gendered configurations of history and modernity, hopes to lay the groundwork for subsequent work on the sex industry in Vanuatu and beyond.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information Sheet for Participants (English)

Ni-Vanuatu sex workers' experiences of and limits to claiming their sexual and reproductive rights in Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu Information sheet for participants: sex workers

Who am I?

My name is Kate Burry, and I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. This research is work towards my thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

This project aims to provide insight into the lives and experiences of Ni-Vanuatu who live in Luganville and engage in transactional sexual activities. This research also aims to inform local and national sexual and reproductive health service providers and advocates with appropriate information as to how they might make their work more effective based on the lived experiences of Ni-Vanuatu sex workers in Luganville.

How can you help?

If you agree to take part, I will interview you in a safe and private place of your choice, for example the clinic at NCYC. I will ask you about your experiences engaging in, or working with people who engage in, transactional sexual activities. The interview will take however long you want it to take, and you can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. With your consent, I will record the interview and write it up later, but please note that only I will have access to the recording, which will be password protected. You can withdraw from the study up to four weeks after the interview. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential. I will not name you in any reports, and I will not include any information that would identify you. Only my academic supervisor and I will read the transcript or notes of the interview; my academic supervisor will also maintain confidentiality over any information disclosed to her. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 3 years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my Masters dissertation, which will be made available online. You will not be identified in my report. I may also use the results of my research for conference presentations, and academic reports. I will take care not to identify you in any presentation or report.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Choose not to answer any question;
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- Withdraw from the study up until four weeks after your interview;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time;
- Read over and comment on a written summary of your interview with the researcher;
- Agree on another name for me to use rather than your real name;
- Be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy (this can be done via the Nurse at the Northern Care Youth Clinic if you do not have access to email or the internet).

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Researcher:

Kate Burry

University email address:

Kate.Burry@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Polly Stupples

Role:

Lecturer in Development Studies

School:

School of Geography, Environment
and Earth Sciences

Phone:

0064 4 463 6793

Polly.Stupples@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 0064 4 463 5480

Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Participants (Bislama)

Olgeta storian blong olgeta Ni-Vanuatu we oli stap mekem seks wok, mo hao nao oli andastandem mo oli yusum olgeta seksual mo reprodaktif raet blong olgeta long Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu
Informatsin blo kivim lo olgeta we oli stap tingting blong kam pat blo riserj ia

Mi hu?

Mi nem blong mi hemi Kate, mo mimi wan student long Victoria University long Wellington, Niu Silan. Riserj ia bambae hemi kam part blong bigfala wok blong mi long university olsem wan thesis.

From wanem nao mi stap mekem riserj ia?

Riserj ia hemi importen blong yumi save andastandem laef mo olgeta tru storian blong olgeta Ni-Vanuatu we oli liv long Luganville mo oli stap mekem seks wok, o oli stap ko araon. Bambae riserj ia bambae i kiv han plente long olgeta klinik mo olgeta narafala organisasin long Vanuatu we oli stap traе had blong liftemap health blong yumi. Be yumi nid blong andastandem gud laef blong yumi festaem, ale bambae yumi save kiv han long yumi.

Olsem wanem nao yu save kiv han long mi?

Spos yu agri se bambae yumitu i storian, bambae yumitu i toktok long wan ples we hemi saef mo hemi qwaet lelebet, olsem klinik long NCYC. Storian blong yumitu bambae i go kasem wanem taem nao bambae yu wantem blong hemi finis, mo yu save finisim storian blong yumitu eni taem yu filim olsem yu wantem blong hemi finis. I no nid blong yu talemaot long mi from wanem nao yu nomo wantem toktok. Bambae mi yusum samting ia (Dictaphone) we bambae hemi rekordem toktok blong yumitu, be mi nomo bambae mi save harem toktok blong yumitu bakegen from bambae mi putum toktok ia iko long komputa blong mi mo hemi gat tu password blong ko insaed. Afta long storian blong yumitu, spos yu desidim se yu nomo wantem blong stap pat blong riserj ia, yu save talemaot long mi, ale bambae mi sakem evri toktok blong yumitu, o bambae mi sendem toktok blong yumitu ikam long yu. Be spos yu desidim se yu nomo wantem blong stap pat blong riserj ia, yu mas talemaot long mi bifo wan manis i pass afta long storian blong yumitu i finis.

Bambae mi mekem wanem wetem olgeta toktok ia we bambae yu sarem wetem mi?

Eni toktok we bambae yu sarem wetem mi, bambae hemi konfidensial. I minim nomo se mi nogat raet blong talemaot nem blong yu, o eni narafala samting we bambae yu talem long mi mo yu ting se sam narafala man bambae oli haremsave o luksave se i stap tokabaot yu. Bambae mi protektem olgeta informasin we bambae yu sarem wetem mi. Mi mo supervisor blong mi long Niu Silan nomo bambae i lukluk long transkrip we bambae mi raetem afta long storian blong yumitu (transcript hemi taem we mi harem toktok blong yumitu bakegen, afta mi raetem olgeta toktok blong yumitu long komputa blong mi). Taem we storian blong yumitu i finis finis, transcript ia mo toktok blong yumitu we bambae i stap long samting ia (Dictaphone) bambae mi sakem mo deletemaot afta long tri yia.

Riserj ia bambae i mekem wanem?

Riserj ia, we bambae toktok blong yumitu bambae hemi kam pat blong hem, bambae mi yusum blong raetem bigfala work blong mi (thesis) long university blong mi. Mo tu maet bambae mi yusum olgeta save we mi bin lanem long risej blong raetem wan ripot o tokabaot long wan meeting. Be

hemi importen blong yu save se bambae mi never talemaot nem blong yu or eni narafala samting we yu luksave se spos wan man hemi luk informasin ia maet bamabe hemi save se i stap tokabaot yu. Bambae mi tek care long informasin blong yu mo long identity blong yu, mo bambae mi mek sua se bambae i neva kam aot.

Spos yu akseptem blong kam pat blong riserj ia, wanem raets nao yuyu gat olsem wan riserj patisipen?

Yu gat raet blong talem no long mi spos yu no wantem blong kam pat blong riserj ia. Spos yu tingting blong kam pat blong riserj ia, olgeta ia oli ol raet blong yu:

- Spos yu no wantem blong anserem wan long ol qwestin ia we bambae mi askem, i stret; i no nid blong yu anserem;
- Spos yu wantem blong mi offem samting ia (Dictaphone) long eni pat blong storian blong yumitu, talemaot long mi, ale bambae mi offem;
- Afta long interview, spos yu nomo wantem blong kam pat blong riserj ia, yu save talemaot long mi, ale bambae mi karemaot yu long riserj. Be plis i nid blong yu talemaot long mi bifo wan manis i pass;
- Yu save askem eni qwestin long mi long saed blong riserj ia, mo yu save askem eni taem.
- Spos yu wantem blong yumitu sidaon mo lukluk bakegen long olgeta informasin we yu bin sarewem wetem long storian blong yumi tu, i stret. Mo tu spos yu ridim eni samting we mi bin raetem long saed blong storian blong yumitu, mo spos yu luk se i no stret, yu save talem long mi, ale bambae mi jenjem;
- Bambae yumitu i agri long wan giaman nem blong yu we bambae mi yusum long riserj blong mi, mo eni narafala ripot;
- Spos yu wantem blong ridim eni ripot long saed blong riserj ia we bambae mi raetem, yu save askem long mi blong mi sendem wan kopi i kam long yu, ale bambae mi sendem ikam.

Spos yu gat eni qwestin o eni samting we yu stap wari long hem, yu save kontaktem mi o supervisor blong mi long university blong mi:

Student:
Nem:
Kate Burry
Email:
Kate.Burry@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:
Nem:
Polly Stupples
Wok blong hem:
Lecturer in Development Studies
Skul:
School of Geography, Environment
and Earth Sciences
Fon/Email:
0064 4 463 6793
Polly.Stupples@vuw.ac.nz

Informesin long saed blong Human Ethics Committee

Spos yu wari se riserj ia hemi nogud o hemi no stret, yu save kontaktem Victoria University HEC
Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 0064 4
463 5480

Appendix 3: Research permit, Vanuatu National Cultural Council

VANUATU NASONAL KALJORAL KAONSEL
Vanuatu National Cultural Council
Conseil National Culturel du Vanuatu

VANUATU KALJORAL SENTA
Vanuatu Cultural Centre
Centre Culturel du Vanuatu

P.O. Box 184, Port Vila, Vanuatu, South Pacific Phone / Fax: (678) 26590 Email: vks@vanuatu.com.vu

RESEARCH AGREEMENT

AN AGREEMENT made the day of, *Thursday 02/06/2016*

BETWEEN: THE CULTURAL COUNCIL, representing the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu and the local community, (hereinafter called "the Council") of the one part.

AND: *Kate Burry*
of (institution) *Victoria University of Wellington*
(hereinafter called "the Researcher") of the other part.

WHEREAS:

- (1) The researcher has applied to the Council to do research work in the Republic of Vanuatu, and agrees to the conditions placed upon her/him in this document and to compliance with the intent of the ethics described in the Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy.
- (2) The Council has agreed to allow the Researcher to do such research, and has agreed to the obligations placed upon it by this document and by the Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy.

AND THEREFORE THE PARTIES AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) The Council hereby authorises the Researcher to undertake research work in Vanuatu on the subject of *sexual and reproductive health rights of young people who engage in commercial or transactional sex work* with the community(ies) of *Luganville* on the island/s of *Espiritu Santo* on the island/s of in the capacity of (if more than one research is involved) for the period up until (Specify if research will involve more than one visit) *31/07/2016*

NASIONAL MUSEUM
National Museum
Musée National

REJISTA BLONG OLGETA OLFAIA PLES BLONG VANUATU
The Vanuatu Cultural and Historic Sites Survey
Inventaire Sites Historiques et Culturels du Vanuatu

NASIONAL FILM MO SAON UNIT
National Film and Sound Unit
Service national du Film et du Son

NASIONAL LAEBRI
National Library
Bibliothèque Nationale

- (2) The Researcher has paid an authorisation fee of **45,000 vatu to cover all administrative costs** incurred in the setting up and implementation of the research venture, or this fee has been waived by the Council.
- (3) The right to the products of research shall belong to the Researcher shall be entitled to reproduce them for educational, academic or scientific purposes, provided that traditional copyrights are not compromised and the permission to use material has been obtained, through the Traditional Copyright Agreement, from copyright holders. The products of research shall not be reproduced or offered for sale or otherwise used for commercial purposes, unless specified under section 12 of this agreement.
- (4) Copies of all non-artefact products of research are to be deposited without charge with the Cultural Centre and, where feasible, with the local community. Two copies of films and videos are to be provided, one for public screening and the other for deposit in the archives. In the case of films, a copy on video is also required. Any artefacts collected become the property of the Cultural Centre unless traditional ownership has been established in the Traditional Copyright Agreement. The carrying of any artefacts or specimens outside the country is prohibited as stipulated under cap.39 of the Laws of Vanuatu. Artefacts and specimens may be taken out of the Country for overseas study and analysis under cap.39(7). The conditions for the return of the following materials are:

(Specify artefacts/specimens/other materials and conditions for return)

The Researcher has either

- (a) provided a letter from the institution to which they are affiliated guaranteeing the researcher's compliance with the above conditions, or
 - (b) provided a retrievable deposit of 40,000 vatu to ensure their compliance with these conditions.
- (5) The Researcher will be responsible for the translation of a publication in a language other than a vernacular language or one of the three national languages of Vanuatu into a vernacular or one of the national languages, preferably the one used in education in the local community. They will also make the information in all products of research, subject to copyright restrictions, accessible to the local community through such means as audio cassettes or copies of recorded information, preferably in the vernacular. The Researcher will also submit an interim report of not less than 2000 words no later than 6 months after the research languages and in "layman's terms" so as to be of general use to all citizens.
 - (6) There will be maximum involvement of indigenous scholars, students and members of the community in research, full recognition of their collaboration, and training to enable their further contribution to country and community. The Council nominates the following individuals to be involved in research and/or trained, in the following capacities:
 - (7) A product of immediate benefit and use to the local community will be provided by the Researcher no later than 6 months after termination of the research period. This product is:
 - (8) In addition to their research work, the Researcher will, as a service to the nation of Vanuatu, undertake to: (section 3 (viii) of the Cultural Research Policy suggests possible services of benefit to the nation)
 - (9) In undertaking research the Researcher will:

- a) recognise the rights of people being studied, including the right not to be studied, to privacy, to anonymity, and to confidentiality;
- b) recognise the primary right of informants and suppliers of data and materials to the knowledge and use of that information and material, and respect traditional copyrights, which always remain with the local community;
- c) assume a responsibility to make the subjects in research fully aware of their rights and the nature of the research and their involvement in it;
- d) respect local customs and values and carry out research in a manner consistent with these;
- e) contribute to the interests of the local community in whatever ways possible so as to maximise the return to the community for their cooperation in their research work;
- f) recognise their continuing obligations to the local community after the completion of field work, including returning materials as desired and providing support and continuing concern.

10) In all cases where information or material data is obtained by the Researcher, a Traditional Copyright Agreement will be completed by the Researcher and the supplier of data regarding this material. The Researcher has a responsibility to make such informants fully aware of their rights and obligations, and those of the Researcher, in the signing of the Traditional Copyright Agreement.

11) A breach of any part of this agreement by the Researcher or a decision by the local community that it no longer wishes to be involved in the researcher venture will result in the termination of the research project.

12)(Addition clauses/conditions) (This section will detail commercial ventures, extra costs incurred by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, etc).

Signed

The Researcher

On behalf of the National Cultural Council

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VANUATU NASONAL KALJORAL KAONSEL
Vanuatu National Cultural Council
Conseil National Culturel du Vanuatu
P.O. Box 184, Port Vila, Vanuatu. Tel: (678) 22129 / 22721, Fax: (678) 26590
Email: vks@vanuatu.com.vu

VANUATU KALJORAL SENTA
Vanuatu Cultural Centre
Centre Culturel du Vanuatu

CT No. 10071

RECEIPT 01388

Date: 3rd June 2016

Received from:

Amount / Sum of:

For / Being for:

CASH	CHQ No.	
	Banque:	BHV - WBC - ANZ - NBV
	Other:	

Prix	VT	45.000
+ VAT		
Total	VT	45.000

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