Gender, Work & Organization

WILEY

ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

"Working the Pages": Entrepreneurship Strategies of Venezuelan Trans Women Refugees Who Enter Sex Work in Brazil During COVID-19

Yvonne Su[1] | Tyler Valiquette[2] | David J. Kinitz[3] | Clara de Oliveira Cunha[4]

[1]York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada | [2]University College London, London, UK | [3]Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA | [4]Universidade Estadual Paulista, São Paulo, Brazil

Correspondence: Yvonne Su (yvonnesu@yorku.ca)

Received: 17 March 2025 | **Revised:** 12 April 2026 | **Accepted:** 20 April 2026

ABSTRACT

The Venezuelan refugee crisis has displaced nearly 8 million people, with transgender and queer refugees among the most marginalized groups. This paper explores the intersecting precarity and entrepreneurship of Venezuelan trans women refugees who became sex workers in Brazil during COVID-19. These women confronted homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and exclusion from both formal employment and community support. Drawing on interviews with 18 trans women sex workers, we demonstrate how limited opportunities and structural barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic compelled many to enter sex work and reveal the innovative strategies, both digital and in person, they developed to navigate risk, survive, and build solidarity. By situating sex work as a form of constrained entrepreneurship shaped by overlapping systems of power and discrimination, our findings offer new insights into the lived realities and adaptive responses of an often-overlooked population in times of crisis.

1 | Introduction

Since 2014, nearly 8 million Venezuelans have fled economic collapse and political instability, with many seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as Brazil (Government of Canada 2025). Brazil's relatively progressive rights and protections for LGBTQ+ people, including same-sex marriage and gender identity recognition, have made it appear a welcoming destination for LGBTQ+ refugees (Malleret 2022; Encarnación 2016; Kingston 2016). However, LGBTQ+ Venezuelan refugees in Brazil frequently encounter homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, gender-based violence, and labor discrimination—conditions that intensified during the Bolsonaro presidency and the COVID-19 pandemic (Valiquette et al. 2020; Cowper-Smith et al. 2022).

The literature is thin on what happens to specific marginalized populations, such as LGBTQ+ refugees and, specifically, trans women refugees, as they establish themselves in the labor market in their new home country (Gailits et al. 2022). Work can provide important benefits, including social cohesion and support, social capital, and access to a variety of other social determinants of health (Frank et al. 2023). How LGBTQ+ refugees integrate themselves into the labor market is particularly important to understand, as LGBTQ+ refugees and trans sex worker refugees are often excluded from community support, including humanitarian organizations and their own ethnic communities; they also often lack the tools or connections to build social capital or access key resources due to stigma (Benoit et al. 2018; Hopkinson et al. 2017; Logie et al. 2024; Su et al. 2025). Brazil's humanitarian apparatus, including the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), has historically prioritized women and children, without prioritizing the needs of LGBTQ+ refugees (Gupta et al. 2023; Dos Santos and Costa 2020). Additionally, LGBTQ+ refugees experience heightened feelings of alienation when arriving in their destination community (Heller 2009). Non-LGBTQ+ refugees

often have support from immediate family members, friends, or other members of their ethnic community when resettling and integrating into the labor market; however, LGBTQ+ refugees are often alone in their migration experience because of discrimination and lateral violence from their ethnic communities and families (Bhagat 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated employment challenges for LGBTQ+ people, particularly those facing intersectional marginalization, leading to disproportionately higher rates of unemployment and job loss (Martino et al. 2022). We explore this problem and the limited understanding of LGBTQ+ refugee entrepreneurship by asking the following questions: (1) How did the COVID-19 crisis influence Venezuelan trans women refugees to pursue sex work in Brazil? and (2) what creative strategies did Venezuelan trans women refugees employ to generate business during the pandemic? We answered these questions through an in-depth study of participants' experiences of entrepreneurship in sex work with particular attention to refugee status, social capital, and LGBTQ+ identities. Based on 18 in-depth interviews with Venezuelan trans women refugees who entered sex work during the pandemic in Brazil, we present findings on their livelihood insecurity and the entrepreneurial strategies they used to navigate it during COVID-19. This article examines a unique moment during the COVID-19 pandemic for Venezuelan trans women refugees, most of whom had not engaged in sex work prior to migrating to Brazil. Specifically, we investigate the entrepreneurial strategies of Venezuelan trans women refugees who became sex workers during COVID-19, highlighting how intersecting forms of stigma and social exclusion drove entry into the business world of entrepreneurship through sex work.

2 | Theoretical Grounding

We foreground the political economy of trans women sex workers in Brazil through an intersectional feminist framework, centering issues of class alongside those of sex and gender (Beloso 2012). Our article's key contribution is to explore this complex tension in practical terms. Trans women sex workers in Brazil experience agency and subjugation related to sex, gender, race, class, legal status, and so on that shape their relation to sex work not solely as trans women but as workers (Beloso 2012; Crenshaw 1991). We seek to understand how these social positions produce trans women sex workers as vulnerable to the capitalist mode of production while understanding decision-making and agency in the types of work they engage in.

We also engage with the concept of intersectional precarity (Su 2023). By combining Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's idea of overlapping precarity, Su presents a more comprehensive understanding that acknowledges the unique experiences of vulnerable populations who face precarity because of their multiple and intersecting social locations. As such, our research examines how trans women refugee sex workers in Brazil navigate risk through the convergence of multiple, marginalized identities within interlocking systems of exclusion. Intersectionality demonstrates that vulnerabilities for this population are not simply additive but are shaped by dynamic interactions between gender identity, sexual orientation, race, migratory status, and sex work. These disparities underscore how intersectional identities and social positions shape experiences of marginalization and discrimination in new environments (Crenshaw 1991; M. Teixeira 2015). Given these specific challenges, examining the intersecting precarity that trans women refugee sex workers face is essential for research on gendered migration, refugee experiences, and sex work. For trans women refugee sex workers, these intersections create unique and compounded forms of social, economic, and legal precarity that surpass the risks encountered by cisgender sex workers or nonmigrant trans people. Although Brazil maintains legal protections for LGBTQ+ people, trans women sex workers face severe transphobia, revealing a disconnect between the country's rights framework and the lived realities of migrants (Valiquette et al. 2020; Su 2023). Further, administrative barriers, such as the reduced provision of services during the pandemic, which prevented full updates to legal documents, and the closure of the Brazil–Venezuela border from March 2020 until February 2022, which prevented the issuance of new documents, intensify their vulnerability and exemplify legal and bureaucratic forms of precarity not experienced by Brazilian trans citizens.

Recent studies emphasize that the intersection of systemic oppression, including cisnormativity, racism, and insecure migratory status, shapes patterns of trauma, exclusion, and survival for transgender migrants (Camminga 2024; Bhagat 2023; Su et al. 2021). Sex work for these individuals often emerges not merely as a constrained economic choice but also as a response to layered structural limitations. Exclusions within some ethnic communities exacerbate this precariousness, as cisnormativity further marginalizes trans people (Bhagat 2023).

Our study centers the lived realities of trans women sex workers. It demonstrates that overlapping systems of oppression—racism, xenophobia, transmisogyny, legal precarity, and irregular migratory status—fundamentally shape their experiences and strategies for work. These intersecting factors structure both the risks faced and the strategies developed for survival. Thus, our analysis advances intersectional and precarity-focused scholarship in migration, showing that these are not simply personal circumstances, but circumstances produced by, and understood within, the broader systems of power and exclusion in which these lives unfold.

2.1 | Conceptualizing Sex Work in Brazil as Entrepreneurial

Although research highlights the risks and vulnerabilities faced by trans women of color in sex work, it pays less attention to the entrepreneurial skills and strategies involved in this work (Logie et al. 2022). Rather than treating sex work as inherently exploitative or culturally normative, we recognize its prevalence as a structural response to labor-market exclusion and position sex work as a form of entrepreneurship (Chin et al. 2019). In Brazil, sexual exploitation is considered a crime, defined as "promoting, facilitating, inducing, or exploiting the prostitution of others" (Brazilian Penal Code 1940), rendering the operation of brothels illegal. Consequently, only the direct provision of

sexual services by the individual themself is permitted, which forces sex workers to operate independently. This model resembles that of autonomous entrepreneurs, characterized by a high level of precarity across multiple dimensions: legal precarity due to the criminalization of third-party involvement, economic precarity stemming from income instability and inadequacy, and social precarity linked to marginalization and stigma. Sex workers must also navigate risk management and innovation continuously to sustain their sources of income.

Although Brazil has never formally regulated sex work, it included the occupation of "companion" in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO 5198-05) in 2002 after advocacy by sex workers' rights activists. The CBO, maintained by the Ministry of Labor, is used to classify occupations for statistical, administrative, and policy purposes. Within this framework, sex workers can register as self-employed and declare income for tax purposes, which facilitates access to certain administrative processes, such as filing income tax returns or contributing to social security, but does not constitute formal recognition of employment or proof of work. In this way, many characteristics of sex work resemble those of other self-employed workers and entrepreneurs, including control or independence over one's work; demonstrating skills beyond the service itself (e.g., marketing and finances); a level of precarity related to high risk, lack of permanency, and income inadequacy; managing risk and innovation; making an economic contribution; and, at its core, building an enterprise (Szaban and Skrzek-Lubasińska 2018). Studies among sex workers describe these characteristics, showing that many demonstrate considerable entrepreneurial skills and pursue formalization, even within formal (legal) economies (Chin et al. 2019; Ruebottom and Toubiana 2021). Our analysis is rooted in the belief that sex work is legitimate and should not be stigmatized, regardless of whether it is entrepreneurial.

3 | Literature Review

3.1 | Motivations and Challenges of Refugee Entrepreneurship

Refugee entrepreneurship literature is nascent. Thus far, academic research on migrant entrepreneurship has largely combined immigrants and refugees in its analysis despite the two groups having vastly different entrepreneurship journeys (Huq and Venugopal 2020; Shneikat and Alrawadieh 2019). Much of the literature focuses on Syrian refugees in countries such as Türkiye, Jordan, and Lebanon (Alexandre et al. 2019; Shneikat and Alrawadieh 2019), with limited studies in Latin America. Furthermore, the literature primarily focuses on refugee men and women presumed to be cisgender and overlooks LGBTQ+ refugees. This study helps address this gap by examining an understudied region and population.

Refugees engage in entrepreneurship at higher rates than any other migrant group, often as a response to exclusion from formal labor markets through de-credentialing, language barriers, and weak social networks (Abebe 2023; Kinitz, Ross, et al. 2024). Literature highlights several motivations for refugees to pursue entrepreneurship, including supporting themselves and their families (Shneikat and Alrawadieh 2019; Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018), prior experience (Alexandre et al. 2019), personal aspirations (Huq and Venugopal 2020), expressing identity, and seeking independence (Shneikat and Alrawadieh 2019). The desire to employ family members, fears of deportation, or challenges complying with labor laws also drive business ownership (Badalic 2023).

Literature highlights that refugee entrepreneurs face numerous barriers, including limited access to financial resources, weak support networks, a lack of business information, difficulty connecting with host communities, legal restrictions, and cultural obstacles (Huq and Venugopal 2020). Research also demonstrates that trans women of color are frequently excluded from formal work due to structural racism and transphobia, intensifying economic insecurity and narrowing employment options (Greene and Woods 2024).

Although some scholars highlight the resilience and adaptability of refugee entrepreneurs, others caution that emphasizing resilience risks obscuring the systemic lack of protection and support from states and international institutions (Chowdhury et al. 2021; Alexandre et al. 2019; Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018; Huq and Venugopal 2020). In the context of sex work, what is often framed as entrepreneurship or self-reliance should instead be understood as a constrained response to precarity and intersecting forms of structural violence, including cisheteronormativity, xenophobia, and economic exclusion. Self-reliance discourse promoted through donors and UNHCR policies can shift responsibility for care onto refugees and Global South host societies while reproducing colonial narratives that cast northern institutions as saviors. These dynamics are concerning amid recent funding cuts to gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights programs, which further erode institutional support for marginalized refugee populations (Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018). Examining trans women sex workers through the lens of intersectionality and precarity highlights how these strategies emerge from systems of power and exclusion, rather than from individual agency or entrepreneurial traits. Moreover, one source of capital that refugee entrepreneurs can often draw on, social capital, is not as readily available to trans refugee entrepreneurs. Trans refugees often face discrimination from both their ethnic and host communities, limiting access to social support and networks that facilitate economic participation (Brooks et al. 2023; Mole et al. 2014; Hopkinson et al. 2017).

3.2 | Motivations to Pursue Sex Work Among Trans People

Trans Venezuelan refugees may enter sex work despite its risks for myriad reasons. However, research on trans sex workers has mainly focused on HIV risk due to the disproportionate vulnerability of this population, leaving broader structural contexts underexplored (Kinitz, Shahidi, et al. 2024). Motivations for refugee entrepreneurship and the barriers refugees face overlap with those of trans sex workers. Trans women are frequently excluded from the formal labor markets due to cissexism, sexism, and xenophobia, pushing many toward sex

work as one of the few available income-generating options (Vartabedian 2019; França and Fontgaland 2020).

Globally, trans sex workers occupy precarious positions due to stigma, discrimination, and structural barriers linked to transphobia and sexism (Logie et al. 2021). These dynamics increase exposure to violence and limit institutional protection (Bernier et al. 2021). However, sex work remains a prominent source of income among trans women excluded from formal employment (Vartabedian 2019). For some individuals, it may also provide income, self-esteem, and forms of empowerment and independence, even as it remains shaped by systemic discrimination (Rosati et al. 2024). Understanding these motivations is especially important in Brazil, where approximately 90% of trans women engage in sex work according to the NGO TransVest (Lopez and Teixeira 2020).

Research on sex work has also highlighted its relatively supportive entrepreneurial context. Despite legal restrictions and stigma, the sector has created various entrepreneurial endeavors, including escort collectives and nonprofit organizations working to support sex workers (Ruebottom and Toubiana 2021). Digital technologies have further transformed the industry by enabling online interactions with clients and expanding independent work, including escorting and webcam performances (Vartabedian 2019; Bernstein 2007).

Cisnormativity and heteronormativity, which privilege cisgender and straight identities, are embedded in social, political, and economic structures that shape trans women's employment (Kinitz et al. 2025). In Brazil, trans people and *travestis*, a distinct Latin American gender identity combining feminine presentation with retained masculine traits (Vartabedian 2016), are frequently excluded from formal employment and pushed toward sex work. Large urban centers where sexual commerce occurs often provide rare spaces where low-income trans people can socialize, access services, and construct feminine identities with relatively less discrimination (Garcia and Lehman 2011). Sexual pleasure and desirability also influence some *travestis*' decisions to engage in sex work. Nevertheless, structural barriers, including transphobia, limited educational opportunities, and a lack of family support, remain central drivers (Garcia and Lehman 2011). Trans women also face vulnerability to trafficking due to marginalization and limited trust in law enforcement (F. Teixeira 2019). For trans refugees, intersecting dynamics of xenophobia and cisheterosexism often result in homelessness and poverty, further increasing pressures to enter sex work (França and Fontgaland 2020). In this context of acute exclusion, sex work becomes one of the only accessible income-generating options for trans women in Brazil.

3.3 | Impact of COVID-19 on Trans Women Sex Workers

Limited research on trans women sex workers necessitates examining the impact of COVID-19 on this population. The pandemic intensified vulnerabilities already experienced by sex workers prior to its onset. Most studies focus on women in the sex industry without specifying gender identity (Brooks et al. 2023). Globally, trans sex workers faced substantial income loss, limited government support, increased stigmatization, homelessness, and reduced healthcare access, and pressure to continue working despite significant health risks (Brooks et al. 2023; Lopez and Teixeira 2020; OAS and R4V 2021; Mlambo and Masuku 2023).

In Brazil, trans women sex workers experienced heightened income insecurity, compounded by increased police harassment and repression (Alpízar Lobo et al. 2022). Although sex work itself is not illegal, pandemic restrictions led to stricter policing and increased raids and extortion, particularly for those working on the streets or outside curfew hours (Alpízar Lobo et al. 2022). Lockdown also reduced customer demand and increased health risk for workers (Su and Valiquette 2022). Research by the National Association of Travestis and Transgender People found that approximately 70% of *travestis* and trans women were unable to access national COVID-19 emergency assistance, forcing many to continue working on the streets throughout the pandemic (Benevides and Nogueira 2021).

Facing these constraints, some trans women sex workers adopted survival strategies, such as high-interest loans or illicit activities, to meet basic needs. These strategies should not be viewed as individual moral failings but as responses to structural violence and exclusion from formal employment, health care, and government relief (Brooks et al. 2023; Vijayakumar 2018). Race and age further intensify insecurity among racialized and older trans sex workers (Brooks et al. 2023). Underfunding and exclusion from aid also limited LGBTQ+ organizations' ability to support trans sex workers, whereas limited digital access complicated shifts to remote services (Camminga 2021; Benevides and Nogueira 2021; OAS and R4V 2021).

Trans refugee sex workers likely experienced even greater vulnerability during COVID-19. Research with trans Venezuelan refugees and undocumented migrants in Brazil revealed that all 12 respondents lost their incomes at the onset of the pandemic (Su and Valiquette 2022). Intersecting transphobia and xenophobia further restricted access to formal employment, pushing many toward sex work as a source of fast money while increasing exposure to trafficking and sexually transmitted infections (Su and Valiquette 2022). During this period, trans women sex workers also reported increased abuse from police and employers, as well as threats of deportation that discouraged reporting of violence (OAS and R4V 2021). Some sex workers attempted to shift to online work during the pandemic, but concerns about client visibility and limited technological access posed barriers (Brooks et al. 2023).

4 | Methods and Site Selection

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study is grounded in community-based research principles (Creswell 2021) and developed in close partnership with Casa Miga, a prominent LGBTQ+ refugee shelter in Manaus. The research received ethical approval from Yvonne Su's university, with strong

commitments to participant confidentiality and safety throughout each stage. The broader project began with 56 surveys and 28 semi-structured interviews conducted between April and October 2021 with LGBTQ+ Venezuelan refugees in Manaus. We used snowball sampling, and all data collection was conducted by Casa Miga's experienced manager, prioritizing sensitivity and informed consent. The sample represented a wide diversity of gender and sexual identities. Building on this foundation, we focused on interviewing 18 Venezuelan trans women refugee sex workers, an especially under-researched and hard-to-reach group. These interviews were conducted in Spanish in Manaus, with 10 in October 2022 and 8 between March and May 2023, all using referral networks and guided by Casa Miga's staff. To ensure participants' well-being and protect their identities, anonymity and discretion were strictly maintained, and daily debriefs with the research team helped address emerging issues. The interviews were then transcribed and translated by Casa Miga's manager. To analyze the data, we used theme generation and employed an explicitly intersectional analytical approach (Crenshaw 1991), examining how sexism, heterosexism, racism, and xenophobia intersected to shape participants' lived realities, risks, and survival strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 | Results and Discussion

We present our findings to answer our research questions, organized by four qualitative themes.

5.1 | Sex Work as New Temporary Source of Income for Trans Venezuelan Refugees During COVID-19

None of the 18 trans women refugees we interviewed had engaged in sex work prior to migrating from Venezuela. Entry into sex work occurred in Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to unemployment and labor-market discrimination. Some had plans to continue their education in Brazil or their previous line of work in beauty or engineering, but the challenges during the pandemic made those options unavailable. Sex work then emerged as a form of constrained entrepreneurship to overcome this gap in their employment and income so they can look for better jobs when the economic situation improves.

Rachel*,[1] a respondent who was a student in Venezuela, shared, "Here in Brazil, I started sex work. In Venezuela, I only dedicated myself to studying. Here, because of the situation and not finding much work, I dedicated myself to prostitution." Similarly, Madeline*, a young respondent, had dreams of going to university in Brazil, noting that "I wanted a university degree so I can have a future, to achieve what I need, and to stabilize myself to think." Needing to have a stable job to pay for their education, neither was able to pursue their dreams during COVID-19, entering sex work instead to afford their basic needs.

Louisa*, a middle-aged respondent, shared that they had gone to university and graduated with a degree in civil engineering, but just as they finished school, the economy in Venezuela worsened, and there were no jobs for them. After they migrated to Brazil, they worked in multiple jobs during the pandemic, including a shoe store, a grocery store, and a beauty salon, before finally engaging in sex work. Even after emphasizing that finding work was "too difficult, super difficult" during the pandemic, they were not pessimistic about their future and looked forward to returning to a professional job. Louisa's experience echoed that of many others who had come to Brazil thinking that they were simply going to continue their previous work in Venezuela as hairdressers or beauticians. Some thought that they would simply gain additional training to improve their skills in Brazil and enter a new profession. In the end, none of these options were available to the 18 respondents, and some described entering sex work as a last resort.

For some, like Lindsey*, a middle-aged respondent, sex work was a necessity and a temporary source of financial aid during a crisis. Lindsey explains,

> There are many people who do sex work. Everyone has their reasons. People who do it because it is the only way to survive. I do it out of necessity, if it would be time to change the opportunity, I would consider another job ... I see it only as an economic solution, I do not see it as a great job with a future. For me, it is only as financial aid.

Similarly, Rebecca*, another middle-aged respondent who traveled to Brazil at the start of the pandemic, explained how she started doing sex work,

> [The] pandemic forced me to go out on the street to have income, you know what I mean? It's something like I said, well, I would go out, I would do anything a little bit because you don't know the day after tomorrow what might happen, what might happen with me and my family.

Joyce*, a young trans woman sex worker, shared that during the pandemic, she felt she had no other option but to turn to sex work, "so the beauty salons closed, and my work was going down. I was no longer attending clients, and I saw that I couldn't work in salons during COVID-19, so I looked for other options, and I couldn't get other options. And that's when I decided to change my job as a sexual escort." Maria*, a young respondent, shared simply that "the hairdressers were closed, so we have to work with our bodies."

Many respondents emphasized that sex work was not their desired long-term occupation. Indeed, respondents frequently described aspirations to pursue alternative careers, education, or vocational training if more stable opportunities became available. These accounts highlight how sex work often functioned as an entrepreneurial strategy shaped by structural barriers rather than a preferred professional pathway.

These narratives underscore that although sex work provided an important source of income during the pandemic, many participants continued to view it as a temporary livelihood strategy shaped by constrained economic opportunities.

5.2 | Labor-Market Discrimination Against Trans Venezuelans Creates Intersecting Precarity

Although a few respondents felt their inability to gain employment during the pandemic was due to a combination of a bad economic situation and bad luck, others felt it was personal to their gender and national identity. Multiple respondents specified that it was xenophobia and discrimination that kept them from being able to find work. Liza*, a middle-aged trans woman sex worker, explained, "I haven't worked for a long time because normally giving a job here to a transsexual, well, what I've seen is a little difficult because there's a lot of xenophobia and things like that." Joyce put it more bluntly: "Because we are trans girls." Here, Liza illustrates how intersecting precarities shape experiences of labor-market discrimination. Liza shared that xenophobia was a barrier to employment, but they also recognized that it was also because of their gender identity as a trans woman. The intersection of these identities is crucial, as Liza's unemployment cannot be explained by nationality or gender identity alone. They had trans Brazilian acquaintances who were consistently employed as well as cisgender Venezuelan friends who were generally always working during the pandemic. Therefore, it was not one of Liza's characteristics alone that contributed to her exclusion from the labor market but the intersection of being trans and being Venezuelan. The additional economic precarity that comes from being both trans and Venezuelan is also a contributing factor to Liza's decision to enter sex work.

Our findings support Greene and Woods (2024), who emphasize that economic precarity for trans women stems from cumulative and racialized gender regulation within the workplace, underscoring the need to address both gender and racial hierarchies in analyzing refugee livelihoods and labor-market integration.

Many of the participants engaged in sex work to earn an income during the pandemic. Evelyn*, a middle-aged sex worker, explained:

> Look, I was affected extremely hard because the pandemic closed many doors, many people were looking for work, and we don't manage to have the income for the person's economy. This is why I needed to go work on the streets and work at night and offer my service to any type of man, woman, or anyone.

Despite feeling that sex work was a necessity for survival, the transition to becoming a sex worker and the feeling of helplessness were very hard on some of the respondents. Linda*, a young sex worker, shared, "It was hard for me because I wasn't used to that life because whatever I am, it's hard to go from being a stylist person to being a sexual escort." Similarly, Rachel*, another young respondent reflecting on feelings of helplessness when she was facing pandemic unemployment, expressed, "I was crying a lot because I couldn't help myself, and I want to help my family. So I was trying to do sex work and other jobs to try to get any money, but it was very hard, very very hard."

During COVID-19, access to multiple labor-market sectors, especially the informal labor market, which often absorbs immigrant labor, was curtailed or eliminated, impacting various populations. In Brazil, prior research has consistently highlighted elevated rates of sex work among trans individuals (Caravaca Morera 2018; Alves 2021; Benevides and Nogueira 2021). However, the regulatory measures implemented in response to the pandemic constrained the available options for trans women sex workers, leaving them with limited or no viable opportunities other than sex work. Consequently, many individuals found themselves compelled to enter the sex work industry and rely on it heavily for financial sustenance during the pandemic.

5.3 | Constrained Entrepreneurship and Trans Solidarity

The literature on social capital and social networks can help to shed light on how trans people turn to sex work as a form of entrepreneurship, especially during the pandemic. We take this further by bringing the two together to describe entering sex work during a crisis as a form of constrained entrepreneurship shaped by overlapping systems of power and discrimination. Social capital has been credited as being an excellent resource during a crisis (Aldrich 2012), and social capital can often help refugee-run businesses succeed and/or make refugees' circumstances more livable through access to resources, information, and support systems. However, LGBTQ+ refugees often have weaker ties to their own ethnic and host communities (Su et al. 2025). Studies on the experience of sex workers during the pandemic found that many sex workers had very little social support (Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Moyo 2022; Benevides and Nogueira 2021), and this was the case prepandemic as well (Burgos and Del Pino 2021; Prata Filho 2023). Thus, trans Venezuelan refugees cannot use their social capital and social networks as a resource during a crisis like their cisgender or Brazilian counterparts can.

An additional finding highlights that trans women sex workers felt unsafe and alienated from trans Brazilian sex workers during the pandemic, limiting their social capital even more and creating competition in finding clients. Maria, a young participant, stated, "No, I haven't worked with Brazilian women ... my friends say that Brazilian women feel like they envy Venezuelan people ... So we do not mix either Brazilians and Venezuelans together; she is on her side, and we are on our side." Similarly, Daniela*, a young respondent, shared, "I don't trust Brazilian women here, only Venezuelan women, because as far as I've heard, the experiences with Brazilian women are not good." Maria and Daniela demonstrate the social isolation trans women sex workers face in Brazil with the distancing from local trans and sex worker communities. In the example above, some participants spoke about a lack of support from local Brazilians and Brazilian trans sex workers, even though they felt they shared similar social identities that could be used to build rapport and trust. Consequently, trans women sex workers had little social capital to access or mobilize in finding work. Our findings validate previous findings in the literature that cultural differences contribute to isolation as the LGBTQ+ diaspora often struggles to connect with local LGBTQ+ groups (Mole et al. 2014) while also facing harassment from their ethnic community (Portman and Weyl 2013; Gorman-Murray et al. 2014).

Furthermore, a previous history of persecution from the community and family members contributes to a distrust among LGBTQ+ refugees, migrants, and diaspora in their host community, hindering social capital development. This highlights how traditional understandings that refugee entrepreneurs can count on their diaspora for business support do not easily apply to gender minorities (Badalic 2023).

Refugee entrepreneurship literature highlights that decisions to pursue entrepreneurship are shaped by personal and social contexts, as well as socially constituted attributes and values (Huq and Venugopal 2020). Gender, sexuality, class, religion, and age shape access to social capital, which, in turn, structures both entrepreneurship and exposure to labor-market exclusion. As such, the concept of intersecting precarity offers a holistic framework for examining how multiple, overlapping social locations shape access to the labor market (Su 2023). However, there were moments of trans solidarity. Our findings show that, in Manaus, some participants leaned on their shared trans identity to support one another in finding work and housing, as well as becoming more entrepreneurial. Rebecca* shared that she had to go through a period of homelessness for approximately 5 months during the pandemic, when it was just not possible for her to pay 400–500 reais a month for rent. However, after some time, Rebecca was able to live with a friend, another Venezuelan trans sex worker, and split the rent. She said of her friend, "She is a very good person, and from time to time she gives me food, gives me things, and invites me to have lunch and dinner and stuff." Here, Rebecca illustrates the significance of companionship and support during these challenging times. Louisa*, a young participant, also had an experience of trans solidarity but across ethnic lines, she explained:

> Venezuelans, Brazilians, we all work on the streets to survive. We work out of necessity. There are some who work for pleasure, but most of us work to pay for our food, to pay our rent, to help our families, to help support our vices. There are good people and bad people; there are good trans girls who help their families, and there are others who work to do bad things as well. Everyone is the owner of their own life.

Most respondents noted that they relied on other queer Venezuelan trans sex workers for economic opportunities, with a few interviewees indicating that they leveraged social capital with trans Brazilian sex workers for housing. This indicates that, when finding work, trans women sex worker refugees relied on their national identity as a form of social capital. When finding housing, they leaned on their identity as trans sex workers to connect with Brazilian trans sex workers. Louisa's perspective demonstrates the solidarity she felt toward other trans people. Indeed, many of the 18 sex workers we interviewed revealed that a trans friend helped them find clients and digitize their sex work. Participants described helping each other create profiles, share phones, and manage online advertising in order to attract clients. Maria stated that a trans woman sex worker friend that she lives with helped her set up a Skokka (a website that helps sex workers find clients) account. Daniela also set up a shared account on Skokka with her trans Venezuelan friend to help pay the rent for their shared apartment. Additionally, Janara*, a young participant, described how her trans friend helped her reach clients through a sex worker website:

> Through a friend, another trans, she told me, Nicole, there is a page called Saitchy, you go with many people, you are going to meet clients, I can publish you and they are going to call you, many men. She published me a page, and I started to receive calls and messages.

Overall, the experiences of trans women sex workers in Brazil highlight the critical role of social capital in entrepreneurial endeavors, particularly for marginalized populations. Despite having minimal avenues of support, participants leaned on each other to adapt to the drastic changes in the labor market during the pandemic, becoming more entrepreneurial as a result.

5.4 | Pushed to Innovate Within Constrained Entrepreneurship

In addition to feeling like they had to be entrepreneurial to survive, participants felt pushed to innovate the ways that they were engaging in sex work. For our participants, a main strategy implemented was "going online," which involved both advertising on adult classified platforms and, for some, transitioning to remote online sex work such as online webcam work, live sex chats, erotic video chat, and other virtual services. These examples demonstrate a range of digital adaptations, from arranging in-person work in safer circumstances to offering sexual services remotely.

Participants shared the creative methods they employed to survive during the pandemic. They shared that they (1) previously solicited clients primarily in person and now identify and solicit clients via social media, especially WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram groups, (2) engaged with new virtual forms of sex work (online webcam work or virtual services such as providing companionship) on platforms such as OnlyFans and Skokka, (3) offered more diverse in-person services such as erotic massages, and (4) took bigger risks such as going to clients' homes.

Several respondents expressed the danger that sex workers felt and experienced on the streets. Whitney*, a young participant, said, "On the streets, I never felt safe with any client. I never feel safe because they are people I don't know. They're unknown characters, and you never know what they are thinking." Moreover, Carrie*, another young participant, explained that Manaus is a dangerous city to work in: "Manaus, let's say that from what I've heard, it's one of the most dangerous cities because every day they kill, although in all of them, it's like that. So that's what it is like for us, we face crime." Indeed, multiple participants shared harrowing stories of abuse at the hands of clients, such as being kidnapped and driven out of the city, physical violence, verbal attacks, and a great deal of mockery. Participants also described frequently dealing with clients who were drunk or on drugs, as well as clients who tried to rob them and get away without paying for any services. Daniela described one of those common encounters, "I was posing on the corner when three people arrived in a car, totally drunk and on drugs,

and they wanted to abuse me. They cut me on my belly here [points to a scar on her belly], but I managed to run away, but they chased me, and I fell on my heels. When they got to me, they asked me to empty my pockets, so I did."

Many of the sex workers we interviewed said they felt safer transitioning from in-person solicitation for sex work to online solicitation during the pandemic. Evelyn shared that "on the pages [websites] there is not much danger, because on the streets, we are insulted, there are people who laugh, people make fun of us, you know?" Similarly, Barbara*, a young respondent, explained,

> Well, at least on the pages, it's a little safer because they come to your room, they come to my room, and it's inside my house where I live, well, and my friend is also there in case something happens, I just scream, and I would go out and help, but in the street, it's more risky because you get in a car and you don't know where they're going to take you and stuff like that.

Likewise, Lindsey, a middle-aged participant, explained,

> The street is riskier because you do not know what the person is like, you know? Because there are people who want to hurt you. You always have to have a knife, something to be able to defend yourself in case that person wants to aggressively abuse you, but on the app, it's very different because you dial the person directly, and the person comes to your room.

In addition to being safer, some respondents said they made more money online. Joyce explained, "Because you already have your place, and the client doesn't have to pay anything for the room. But on the street, you charge. For example, you charge 80 reais, and 30 are for the hotel, and 50 are yours, so no, it's not worth it." However, there is also a lot of competition. Kim*, a middle-aged trans woman sex worker, explained:

> Well, I published myself for the first time on the pages, and I did very well at first. Then as they started to publish more trans, everything was dropping because there were already some new ones, and so it was like that and so on and so on until there were no more new clients. Then I entered the other page, the one which was only transsexuals, also, many transsexuals were published. Many, many, many. So, as I said, there is competition, there is a lot of competition, there are some that charge more expensive, others that charge cheap and run cheap, and so on.

This adaptive behavior of moving online and working remotely aligns with the notion of resilience among refugees, as they actively seek alternative strategies and resources to overcome challenges (Chowdhury et al. 2021; Alexandre et al. 2019). Other studies on the experience of sex workers during the pandemic also found that they went online (Bernier et al. 2021; Brooks et al. 2023). Despite facing precarious working conditions and the inherent risks associated with sex work, the sex workers recognized the potential advantages of moving their operations online. They felt safer and more in control of their working environment, enabling them to focus on their business while mitigating some of the risks posed by street-based sex work. However, it is important to note that going online was not available to all trans women sex workers because those who were not technologically literate or skilled or did not have access to their own smartphones or computers were not able to go online. Although respondents note that they often share resources such as phones and computers, how often they would need to be online was not conducive to their usual practices of sharing devices. The inability to go online was also a limitation brought up by Brooks et al. (2023) in their scoping review of the experiences of sex workers during COVID-19.

These experiences draw attention to technological literacy, and literacy more generally, as another social location that can contribute to and compound someone's exclusion from the labor market, forcing them to become entrepreneurial in informal sectors where literacy is less significant. In the case of trans women sex workers, a lack of technological literacy was another intersectional position that made them more precarious during the pandemic. This was because some of them could not move their business online and instead had to continue to work on the streets during a time when it was highly risky to interact intimately with strangers, both from a health and physical safety perspective.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that the engagement of trans women refugee sex workers during the pandemic reflects a complex interplay between resilience and agency. Although their pathways into sex work were mostly shaped by constrained opportunities—such as limited access to formal employment and significant protection gaps in Brazilian and international responses to Venezuelan LGBTQ+ communities—their actions also demonstrate their agency in strategic decision-making. In this sense, resilience should not be understood as an inherent trait but as a response to structural constraints, often exercised through agentic choices within limited options. Expanding targeted programs to support the livelihoods of LGBTQ+ individuals in times of crisis could broaden these options, enabling choices that are less constrained and reducing the pressure to rely on sex work as a primary means of income.

6 | Conclusion

Our findings show that the pandemic intensified the hardships that Venezuelan trans women refugees were already facing in Brazil, with ongoing struggles related to housing, employment, and well-being (Prata Filho 2023; França and Fontgaland 2020). COVID-19 and its pandemic restrictions on work, borders, and general mobility magnified hardships, leading all 18 respondents in the study to enter sex work despite often having goals for further education or working in different industries.

This study's main contribution lies in highlighting how Venezuelan trans women refugees who entered sex work in Brazil navigated intersectional precarity during the pandemic by

leveraging digital tools and social capital, adapting to new forms of sex work, and supporting each other. These strategies capture the agency that was demonstrated by these trans Venezuelan refugees during an extremely challenging time in their lives. As such, we framed sex work as a form of constrained entrepreneurship shaped by overlapping systems of power and exclusion to illuminate the lived realities and adaptive responses of marginalized groups during crisis. Moreover, such framing helped to spotlight the innovation that has been born out of trans solidarity and resisting systems of oppression, as the strategies employed by the trans women refugees enhanced safety and resilience. These experiences offer lessons for service organizations, humanitarian agencies, and policymakers in migration hubs in the Global South. These include policies that reduce labor discrimination, expand alternative income and employment programs, and support community-driven strategies for both social and economic empowerment.

By focusing on an understudied and marginalized group, this research expands understanding of how intersecting identities and vulnerabilities shape income insecurity, employment precarity, and entrepreneurship among trans refugees during crisis. Respondents carefully articulated the type of transphobia and xenophobia they were experiencing in hiring and labor-market integration, contributing to the scholarship on the gender and racial hierarchies of refugee livelihoods (Greene and Woods 2024). Our findings on trans solidarity highlight how marginalized populations find ways to work together across ethnic lines to overcome common challenges during periods of crisis. Ongoing research should explore how to reach and support the most isolated trans refugee sex workers to ensure more inclusive support across contexts.

Funding

This work was supported by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Grant No. 1008-2020-0224).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Endnotes

[1] Pseudonyms are used to protect participants' identities.

References

Abebe, S. A. 2023. "Refugee Entrepreneurship: Systematic and Thematic Analyses and a Research Agenda." *Small Business Economics* 60, no. 1: 315–350. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-022-00636-3.

Aldrich, D. P. 2012. *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*. University of Chicago Press.

Alexandre, L., C. Salloum, and A. Alalam. 2019. "An Investigation of Migrant Entrepreneurs: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon." *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research* 25, no. 5: 1147–1164. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijebr-03-2018-0171.

Alpízar Lobo, N., M. Rivers-Moore, and K. Hardy. 2022. *Sex Work, COVID-19, and Mutual Aid in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Focused Initiative on Social Transformation, Carleton University. https://carleton.ca/fist/wp-content/uploads/ENG_2022.pdf.

Alves, F. B. 2021. *Travestis e transexuais no mercado de trabalho: reinserção social e efetivação da cidadania*. Universidade Estadual Paulista. https://ebooks.marilia.unesp.br/index.php/lab_editorial/catalog/download/249/2397/4052?inline=1.

Badalic, V. 2023. "Trapped in the Underground Economy: Syrian Refugees in the Informal Labour Market in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 44, no. 5: 967–984. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2170224.

Beloso, B. M. 2012. "Sex, Work, and the Feminist Erasure of Class." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 1: 47–70. https://doi.org/10.1086/665808.

Benevides, B. G., and S. N. B. Nogueira. 2021. *Dossiê assassinatos e violência contra travestis e transexuais brasileiras em 2020*. Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais do Brasil (ANTRA).

Benoit, C., M. Smith, M. Jansson, S. Magnus, J. Flagg, and R. Maurice. 2018. "Sex Work and Three Dimensions of Self-Esteem: Self-Worth, Authenticity and Self-Efficacy." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 20, no. 1: 69–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2017.1328075.

Bernier, T., A. Shah, L. E. Ross, C. H. Logie, and E. Seto. 2021. "The Use of Information and Communication Technologies by Sex Workers to Manage Occupational Health and Safety: Scoping Review." *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 23, no. 6: e26085. https://doi.org/10.2196/26085.

Bernstein, E. 2007. *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*. University of Chicago Press.

Bhagat, A. 2020. "Queer Necropolitics of Forced Migration: Cyclical Violence in the African Context." *Sexualities* 23, no. 3: 361–375. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718797258.

Bhagat, A. 2023. "Queer Global Displacement: Social Reproduction, Refugee Survival, and Organised Abandonment in Nairobi, Cape Town, and Paris." *Antipode* 55, no. 5: 1517–1537. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12933.

Brazilian Penal Code. 1940. "Decree-Law No. 2,848, Arts. 218-A, 227–228." https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/del2848compilado.htm.

Brooks, S. K., S. S. Patel, and N. Greenberg. 2023. "Struggling, Forgotten, and Under Pressure: A Scoping Review of Experiences of Sex Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 52, no. 5: 1969–2010. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02633-3.

Burgos, C. R., and F. J. P. Del Pino. 2021. "'Business Can't Stop.' Women Engaged in Prostitution During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Southern Spain: A Qualitative Study." *Women's Studies International Forum* 86: 102477. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2021.102477.

Camminga, B. 2021. "LGBTQI+ and Nowhere to Go: The Makings of a Refugee Population Without Refuge." *African Security* 14, no. 4: 370–390. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.2006402.

Camminga, B. 2024. "Withholding the Letter: Transgender Asylum Seekers, Legal Gender Recognition, and the UNHCR Mandate." *Journal of Refugee Studies*: feae058. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feae058.

Caravaca Morera, J. 2018. "Sobre Campos de Batallas: Representaciones Sociales del Comercio Sexual entre Mujeres Auto-identificadas como Transexuales y Travestis Brasileñas." *Actualidades en Psicología* 32, no. 125: 79–93. https://doi.org/10.15517/ap.v32i125.30528.

Chin, J. J., L. M. Takahashi, Y. Baik, et al. 2019. "Illicit Massage Parlors in Los Angeles County and New York City: Stories From Women Workers."

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e4835857fcd934d19bd9673/t/5e7fde8379950130737ed0f5/1585438345704/MassageParlorStudy.pdf.

Chowdhury, R., B. Siedler, and S. Lall. 2021. "Entrepreneurship Under Extreme Constraints: Evidence of Micro-Bricolage From Rohingya Refugee Camps." *Academy of Management Proceedings* 2021, no. 1: 15152. https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2021.30.

Cowper-Smith, Y., Y. Su, and T. Valiquette. 2022. "Masks Are for Sissies: The Story of LGBTQI+ Asylum Seekers in Brazil During COVID-19." *Journal of Gender Studies* 31, no. 6: 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2021.1949970.

Crenshaw, K. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Colour." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6: 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

Creswell, J. W. 2021. *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE Publications.

Dos Santos, J. E. C., and T. R. Costa. 2020. "Gênero e Covid-19 no Contexto da População de Refugiados e Migrantes na cidade de Manaus–Amazonas." *Mundo Amazónico* 11, no. 2: 62–74. https://doi.org/10.15446/ma.v11n2.88474.

Easton-Calabria, E., and N. Omata. 2018. "Panacea for the Refugee Crisis? Rethinking the Promotion of 'Self-Reliance' for Refugees." *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 8: 1458–1474. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2018.1458301.

Encarnación, O. 2016. *Out on the Periphery: Latin America's Gay Rights Revolution*. Oxford University Press.

França, I. L., and A. Fontgaland. 2020. "Gênero, Sexualidades e Deslocamentos: Notas Etnográficas sobre Imigrantes e 'Refugiados LGBTI' no Norte do Brasil." *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana* 28, no. 59: 49–68. https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-85852503880005904.

Frank, J., C. Mustard, P. Smith, et al. 2023. "Work as a Social Determinant of Health in High-Income Countries: Past, Present, and Future." *Lancet* 402, no. 10410: 1357–1367. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(23)00871-1.

Gailits, N., M. M. Pastor-Bravo, D. Gastaldo, et al. 2022. "Fighting for Inclusion Across Borders: Latin American Trans Women's Health in Canada." *International Journal of Transgender Health* 23, no. 1–2: 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2021.1988877.

Garcia, M. R. V., and Y. P. Lehman. 2011. "Issues Concerning the Informality and Outdoor Sex Work Performed by Travestis in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 40, no. 6: 1211–1221. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-010-9702-4.

Gorman-Murray, A., S. Mckinnon, and D. Dominey-Howes. 2014. "Queer Domicide: LGBT Displacement and Home Loss in Natural Disaster Impact, Response, and Recovery." *Home Cultures* 11, no. 2: 237–262. https://doi.org/10.2752/175174214x13891916944751.

Government of Canada. 2025. "Canada's Response to the Venezuela Crisis." https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/crisis-crises/venezuela.aspx?lang=eng.

Greene, J. E., and E. Woods. 2024. "The Cost of Crossing Gender Boundaries: Trans Women of Color and the Racialized Workplace Gender Order." *Gender, Work & Organization* 31, no. 8: 1588–1607. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13108.

Gupta, G. R., C. Grown, S. Fewer, R. Gupta, and S. Nowrojee. 2023. "Beyond Gender Mainstreaming: Transforming Humanitarian Action, Organizations, and Culture." *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 8, no. 1: 5. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-023-00138-1.

Heller, P. 2009. "Challenges Facing LGBT Asylum-Seekers: The Role of Social Work in Correcting Oppressive Immigration Processes." *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 21, no. 2–3: 294–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720902772246.

Hopkinson, R. A., E. Keatley, E. Glaeser, L. Erickson-Schroth, O. Fattal, and M. Nicholson Sullivan. 2017. "Persecution Experiences and Mental Health of LGBT Asylum Seekers." *Journal of Homosexuality* 64, no. 12: 1650–1666. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1253392.

Huq, A., and V. Venugopal. 2020. "DIY Entrepreneurship? – Self-Reliance for Women Refugees in Australia." *International Migration* 59, no. 1: 126–142. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12727.

Kingston, L. N. 2016. "Haitians Seeking Refuge in Brazil." *Peace Review* 28, no. 4: 482–489. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2016.1237118.

Kinitz, D. J., L. E. Ross, E. MacEachen, C. Fehr, and D. Gesink. 2024. "'... Full of Opportunities, but Not for Everyone': A Narrative Inquiry Into Mechanisms of Labor Market Inequity Among Precariously Employed Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Men." *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 67, no. 4: 350–363. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23574.

Kinitz, D. J., F. V. Shahidi, H. Kia, et al. 2024. "Precarious Employment: A Neglected Issue Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Workers." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 22: 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-024-00950-3.

Kinitz, D. J., N. K. Tran, F. V. Shahidi, et al. 2025. "Associations of Minority Stress and Employment Discrimination With Job Quality Among Sexual- and Gender-Minority Workers." *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health* 51, no. 3: 214–225. https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.4221.

Logie, C. H., D. J. Kinitz, L. Gittings, et al. 2024. "Intersecting Stigma and the HIV Care Cascade: Qualitative Insights From Sex Workers, Men Who Have Sex With Men, and Transgender Women Living With HIV in Jamaica." *AIDS and Behavior* 28, no. 11: 3768–3786. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-024-04460-6.

Logie, C. H., D. J. Kinitz, L. Gittings, Y. Persad, A. Lacombe-Duncan, and T. Poteat. 2022. "Eliciting Critical Hope in Community-Based HIV Research With Transgender Women in Toronto, Canada: Methodological Insights." Supplement, *Health Promotion International* 37, no. Supplement_2: ii37–ii47. https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daac017.

Logie, C. H., Y. Wang, P. Lalor, K. Levermore, and D. Williams. 2021. "Exploring the Protective Role of Sex Work Social Cohesion in Contexts of Violence and Criminalisation: A Case Study With Gender-Diverse Sex Workers in Jamaica." In *Sex Work, Health, and Human Rights: Global Inequities, Challenges, and Opportunities for Action*, 79–94.

Lopez, O., and F. Teixeira. 2020. "As Latin America Locks Down, Trans Sex Workers Struggle to Survive." *Thomas Reuters Foundation News*, April 4. https://news.trust.org/item/20200424061304-tmdvj.

Malleret, C. 2022. "Brazil Edges Back Up the Global Economies Ranking." *Brazilian Report*, June 2. https://brazilian.report/liveblog/politics-insider/2022/06/02/brazil-ranking-top-economies.

Martino, R. J., K. D. Krause, M. Griffin, C. LoSchiavo, C. Comer-Carruthers, and P. N. Halkitis. 2022. "Employment Loss as a Result of COVID-19: A Nationwide Survey at the Onset of COVID-19 in US LGBTQ+ Populations." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 19, no. 4: 1855–1866. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00665-9.

Mavhandu-Mudzusi, A. H., and I. Moyo. 2022. "How Do You Expect Us to Survive? Lamentation of Female Sex Workers in Zimbabwe During COVID-19 Lockdown." *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 26, no. 3: 10. https://doi.org/10.29063/ajrh2022/v26i3.12.

Mlambo, V. H., and M. M. Masuku. 2023. "Neglected With No Social Protection: The Plight of Sex Workers During COVID-19 in South Africa." *Social Sciences* 12, no. 2: 69. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12020069.

Mole, R. C. M., V. Parutis, C. J. Gerry, and F. M. Burns. 2014. "The Impact of Migration on the Sexual Health, Behaviours, and Attitudes of Central and East European Gay/Bisexual Men in London." *Ethnicity & Health* 19, no. 1: 86–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2013.789829.

OAS and R4V. 2021. "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Refugees and Migrants From Venezuela." https://www.r4v.info/en/document/impact-covid-19-pandemic-refugees-and-migrants-venezuela-0.

Portman, S., and D. Weyl. 2013. "LGBT Refugee Resettlement in the US: Emerging Best Practices." *Forced Migration Review* 42: 44–47. https://doaj.org/article/2848c4be97284c48b97ce5bed18d3076.

Prata Filho, R. 2023. "Rastros Performativos no Acolhimento Humanitário: Migração e Refúgio de Venezuelanas LGBTI+ na Operação Acolhida." Master's thesis, Pontífica Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro. Supervisor: R. V. Yamato.

Rosati, F., J. Pistella, V. Coletta, and R. Baiocco. 2024. "Racialized Migrant Transgender Women Engaged in Sex Work: Double Binds and Identifications With the Community." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 53, no. 3: 1153–1168. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02804-2.

Ruebottom, T., and M. Toubiana. 2021. "Constraints and Opportunities of Stigma: Entrepreneurial Emancipation in the Sex Industry." *Academy of Management Journal* 64, no. 4: 1049–1077. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2018.1166.

Shneikat, B., and Z. Alrawadieh. 2019. "Unraveling Refugee Entrepreneurship and Its Role in Integration: Empirical Evidence From the Hospitality Industry." *Service Industries Journal* 39, no. 9–10: 741–761. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2019.1571046.

Su, Y. 2023. "No One Wants to Hire Us: The Intersectional Precarity Experienced by Venezuelan LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers in Brazil During COVID-19." *Anti-Trafficking Review* 21: 52–70. https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201223214.

Su, Y., and T. Valiquette. 2022. "'They Kill Us Trans Women': Migration, Informal Labour, and Sex Work Among Trans Venezuelan Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants in Brazil During COVID-19." *Anti-Trafficking Review* 19: 119–124. https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201222198.

Su, Y., T. Valiquette, and Y. Cowper-Smith. 2021. "Surviving Overlapping Precarity in a 'Gigantic Hellhole'." *Statelessness & Citizenship Review* 3, no. 1: 155–162. https://doi.org/10.35715/scr3001.1114.

Su, Y., T. Valiquette, and C. De Oliveira Cunha. 2025. "Networks of South-South Queer Forced Displacement: A Case Study of the Social Capital of LGBTQ+ Venezuelan Asylum Seekers in Northern Brazil." *Global Networks*.

Szaban, J., and M. Skrzek-Lubasińska. 2018. "Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Approach." *Journal of Management and Business Administration. Central Europe* 26, no. 2: 89–120. https://doi.org/10.7206/jmba.ce.2450-7814.230.

Teixeira, F. 2019. "'I Am With You' – The Trans Women Helping Trafficking Victims in Brazil." *Reuters*, May 15. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-lgbt-trafficking-idUSKCN1SL0BK.

Teixeira, M. 2015. "Native 'Metronormativities': Homosexual Migrations and Urban Spaces in Brazil." *Áskesis* 4, no. 1: 23–38. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348724060_Metronormatividades_nativas_migracoes_homossexuais_e_espacos_urbanos_no_Brasil.

Valiquette, T., Y. Su, and E. Felix. 2020. *Out of the Shadows: The Precarious Lives of Venezuelan LGBTQI+ Asylum-Seekers in Brazil*. Overseas Development Institute's Humanitarian Practice Network. https://odihpn.org/blog/out-of-the-shadows-the-precarious-lives-of-venezuelan-lgbtqi-asylum-seekers-in-brazil/.

Vartabedian, J. 2016. "Beauty That Matters: Brazilian Travesti Sex Workers Feeling Beautiful." *Sociologus* 66, no. 1: 73–96. https://doi.org/10.3790/soc.66.1.73.

Vartabedian, J. 2019. "Bodies and Desires on the Internet: An Approach to Trans Women Sex Workers' Websites." *Sexualities* 22, no. 1–2: 224–243. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460717713381.

Vijayakumar, G. 2018. "Is Sex Work Sex or Work? Forming Collective Identity in Bangalore." *Qualitative Sociology* 41: 337–360. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-018-9390-2.