

What makes sex work work?

Lived experiences of sex workers in illegal environments vs. decriminalised environments

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What is my project about?

My thesis was to make a comparison between the lives of sex workers in places where sex work is illegal (New York City, USA), versus where it is decriminalised (Wellington, New Zealand). I looked at issues such as violence, stigma, disease prevention, and community support.

I ask myself: what are their lives like in such different working environments?

The theories I will be looking at are ideas of purity and pollution by Mary Douglas, and power dynamics between authority figures and marginalised groups.

My internship

My internship was with the New Zealand Prostitute's Collective (NZPC). They are an organisation which began as a peer-based, grass-roots support group for sex workers during the HIV crises of the '80s. There, I learned about how NZPC helps educate, support, and guide sex workers through a safe journey during their time in the profession. NZPC has been credited with aiding in the prevention of violence, STI/STD transmission, have created a strong community

My Research Methods

My research methods involved interviewing several different sex workers in NYC, and in Wellington, New Zealand. I interviewed them in locations such as brothels, public meeting places, and even their own private homes.

I had a set of interview questions, consent forms, and even a survey that way I could do a bit of quantitative data gathering as well.

What was my experience like?

I had an eye opening experience, learning what the lives of sex workers are like. I learned a lot about why trust matters in research, and I learned about the importance of peer-based community organisations in support of marginalised groups.

brothel
owner



Catherine
Healy
NZPC
founder

