

Researching Sex Work

Speakers: Lilith Brouwers (LB); Dr Nick Mai (NM); Dr Raven Bowen (RB) – National Ugly Mugs; Carolyn Henham (CH); Niki Adams (NA) – English Collective of Prostitutes.

In May 2019 SWARM hosted a three day festival involving panel discussions across a wide range of topics that impact on sex workers, and that connect and intersect with sex worker rights organising and broader struggles for justice.

This recording is from that festival.

00:00:00 LB Hi everyone, we are finally ready for the research panel, I'm very excited so many of you are here, that is wonderful. Just a slight point of order, if people don't want to be photographed and they have one of those yellow stickers, please move to that side. If you can't hear what someone's saying because we suck with microphones, wave and be like, "Hey, I can't hear you!" and we will fix that because we want everybody to follow what we're doing. If for academic reasons we are speaking too academically and you're like, "What the hell are you on about?" that is also a completely fair reason to interrupt so please tell us. There are some people here that are very, very used to speaking in academic conferences as well as many other places, so if goes a bit too much that way please tell us not to. Alright, let me introduce everyone here. And I'm going to start with myself! Hi, I'm Lilith, I am a postgraduate researcher at the University of Leeds; I will say one or two words about it at the end, but my research is absolutely not relevant because we're looking at some of the most interesting research that's been done on sex work at the moment. Here are my panellists, I've also been asked to explain why there is a big gap between the—this is not a philosophical gap or a political gap, this is a, "There's air blowing out of that and also there's light coming out of it and everyone wants to be comfortable," gap. Just saying. Alright, so, at the front we have Carolyn Henham, who is a Winston Churchill Fellowship scholar, which

sounds really fancy right? I like it. She's researching best practice of managed areas of sex work in the European context which basically means that she travelled all around Europe talking to people about - and visiting - outdoor sex working areas and how they are managed in different countries. A very interesting project, she's been working in many roles around the topic of sex work for a while, thirty odd years. Next to her is Niki Adams, spokeswoman for the English Collective of Prostitutes, which... I hope by now we all know who the ECP are? We clear? Campaigners and now also researchers, they've brought out some pieces of peer research which I find so interesting, stuff like this. She's going to tell us more about that research! Then on the other side of the divide we have Dr Nick Mai, a Professor of Sociology and Migration Studies at Kingston University London, who will be speaking on his latest project. All the way on my side here we have Dr Raven Bowen, which many of you know is the CEO of National Ugly Mugs, and not all of you know is a doctor! Not a medical one, the one that works really, really hard on research, and is going to speak on her research on duality, we'll get to what that means in a little bit. Important about your research is that it is embargoed, which is an academic term for, "It should not be public yet," because there's rules around publication, so what we're doing is really secret here! Very important! You can know about this research but please don't take pictures of the slides. Are the other panellists okay with pictures of slides being taken? Pictures of them saying clever stuff being taken? It's okay to say no! Yeah? Okay. Alright, I think that is all the practicalities, so let's get to the meat of what we're doing which is starting with Raven.

00:04:28 RB Great! Hello, hello! So great to be here under the scholarship identity and the build-up there, I don't know if there's going to be a happy ending or not, but I'll tell you a little bit about my study. It is embargoed as Lilith said, because I want to strategically include lived experiences of people with dual lives into the public domain in ways that are safe, ways that are strategic and in ways that feed into some of the larger arguments about labour markets, precarity and this whole idea that survival sex is something new. Duality isn't something new either, duality has a long history; people have been blending sex work with square jobs and other kinds of income for hundreds of years, maybe thousands. Even during the slave trade there were domestic workers...well, there were slaves, later on domestic workers, who were also offered for sexual services and raped through that. There were domestic workers in this country who were supposed to be available for sexual services, so we have a long history. Also in some cultures, blending sex work with other jobs is an emancipatory practice; it's liberating, it's a way of avoiding some of the pitfalls of sole sex

working and also sole reliance on crappy, shitty jobs. Basically my sample is inspired by PhD work or MA work in Canada where I was looking at transition, mostly because I couldn't stand the way that it was framed in research and that was on the back of a couple of decades as a practitioner. I have several ways of knowing about sex work and I couldn't let what was in the academic milieu stand, because it was inaccurate and it was based on the idea of sex work as harm and that people are never strategically involved and it's chaotic and all this other garbage. The UK sample was... I have a Canadian sample that's not included here, but basically majority identified as women, most identified as white and also most were between thirty-one and forty, very diverse in terms of sexuality. Straight for pay, gay for pay, all of that. I mapped their work across private sector, public sector and third sector to see how much work they did in each, how much income they derived from their work and how much time they spent doing it because as some of you know, the time/money ratio in sex work for most people appears to be part of the rationale of doing it? Limited time investment, more of a pay-out than you would if you were working at Costa or delivering meals by bike in the evening. Education: very highly educated as we see with off-street populations anyway; I think people talk about these workers as privileged, that's a relative term I'm putting in quotes because people negotiate power in relationships and sometimes depending on who or what you are you can negotiate more or less power depending on what's going on. But I have to say, I'm thankful to Nick because he was not only my external, but also helped me understand the savvy nature of individuals who are blending audiences and information and how they have access to discourse and a way of explaining their work that is nested in a broader analysis of labour. He helped me see that as privilege and not feeling as if that's a dirty word, because I don't see the people in my study as privileged necessarily, I see them as very precarious workers that are blending shitty jobs on both sides of the aisle sometimes, right? Okay, so four major contributions of this work, and this is the part that needs to be just in this room because of how I'm going to insert this wisdom. The UK Whorearchy, many of you know there's a Whorearchy, there's a way of ranking sex workers; it's classed, it's raced, it's gendered, it's also type of work, how you do that work and how you're perceived to do that work and all of that. Value is negotiated based on that person's ability to earn more or less income based on how they're positioned within that Whorearchy. In particular, my data collection occurred before, during and after the EU referendum, so people were not only negotiating whiteness and colourism and Balkanism as we see in the hierarchies of whiteness and who gets to be white...white people were constructed out of whiteness and I'm like, "Well, you're all white!" but actually, the Brexit

rhetoric made it so that some people are more white and valuable than some other people who are also white. That was a big issue, and how the Brexit decision... because sex workers are rarely included when we think about geo-political decisions and how it's going to affect their work and their mobility and all of that. Not only did individuals have an opportunity to reflect on their sex work in terms of Brexit and their touring etcetera, but also their square jobs in terms of Brexit and how those are intersecting and affecting their lives. Then role transition, it's an old theory that we step in and out of roles, we're balancing different relationships and identities, ways of being in the world, there's macro role transition that's usually seen when people are moving careers, so from police officer to a dentist or whatever. Then there's a micro role transition when you're moving from being a sex worker to a mom, right? So people who live dual lives are using strategies that are seen in both of those kinds of transition and trying to make sure that they control how they're known in their family sphere, in their sex work sphere, in their square work and then all of these overlapping sections that are part of a dual life relational paradigm. In some of the ways that those fears overlap, you can either be facilitated in your duality or you have a backstage and everybody knows you're a dentist doing webcam, your family might know or it's a potential location for being outed in every way possible. So the way sex work and square work overlap, the way square work and personal and sex work and personal and then sex work, square work and personal; there's all of these dynamics that were illuminated through the lived experiences of participants. The most important thing...not the most important thing but populating this continuum of sex work involvement where there's sole sex working on one end, sole square work on the other, and then a sort of mashup of ways of engaging in sex work and square work across and in between that space based on goals was I think one of the largest contributions because of the way that that has been represented as chaotic as I mentioned. That's part of what I can't share, but what I can say is that it will challenge how movement in and out of the sex industry is framed and also how people are able to blend both kinds of work in ways that either meet interim emergency goals and needs for projects like tuition or paying off debt or saving money to get onto the property ladder, but also for social mobility, right? So people move into the sex industry for money, for fun, for excitement, all kinds of reasons, but the three main reasons for duality fall into this immediacy need, this thing about a project, paying for all kinds of things that come up and are longer term but they have a finite end date. The social mobility and economic security, so this 'flexicurity' through blending the two jobs is contributing to some of the larger discourse around precarious labour because this population, unlike some other precarious

labours that you see in literature or in the newspapers talking about gigging economies, these individuals make far more than the average income. So if the average income in the UK is £26,500 at the time of this study, some of these individuals are quadrupling the average income. Some are making between ten and a hundred and twenty thousand pounds a year; however, they are still precarious because of the ways they have to manage that, because of the ways they can use that money to leverage. But their precarity is creeping into the middle classes because some of these individuals, as we see, hold degrees and all kinds of other skills; you can't sell them this lie that square work is the salvation for sex workers because they're already working in those jobs, right? Blending is the only way that makes sense for them for these different periods of time based on their life cycle and what they're doing. Just summing up here, we know about labour markets and precarity, I think I talked about that. The last thing I wanted to say... there is an animation that came out of this study, one is an overview, one is talking about the continuum and the other things that I spoke about, but there are tips and strategies for living a dual life that I'm going to put behind membership walls at National Ugly Mugs because I don't think we should be sharing tips and strategies. My apologies for the ways that things have been shared in the past, but I'm not sharing these tips and strategies because this is how people stay safe; we see what happens when people get outed, so it's going to be on adult services sites in networks where sex workers exist. It's going to be animated, so it's going to be very accessible and all that... thank you very much, I hope to share more later!

[Audience applauds muffled discussions from panellists as microphones are exchanged]

00:15:45 LB Thank you so much Raven, I'm really sorry for rushing all of you, it's way nicer to be able to talk about your research for an hour, it's so much more fun but I really want to give the opportunity for everyone to speak about their research. The next person to talk about their research is Carolyn! Do you want to be over here?

00:16:16 CH Yeah, I'll be over here.

00:16:17 LB Do you want to sit or stand?

00:16:18 CH I'll stand. Can you give me a two-minute warning then?

00:16:20 LB Yes. Okay this is you if you want to move to the next one just press that.

00:16:22 CH So that's on me. Oh there I am. She's changed my frontpiece—Hi, my name's Carolyn and I guess the first thing I want to say is that the duality thing has played a large part in my life, working between sex worker, practitioner and sex work researcher really, over a large span of time. Following my Masters in Social Research at Leeds I applied for a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship, which I just wanted to basically encourage... that you don't always have to go down the regular University route, there are other funding organisations out there that sometimes are more flexible to fund some more oddball, one-off projects. It was a good application process, they're very supportive and I... . So, I just wanted—this research came out of the establishment of the Leeds managed area for sex work, I was a practitioner at the time delivering outreach, benefits and housing and drug referral advice. We were particularly struck about the way that sex work, street sex work in particular was changing or has changed over a long period of time; I'm going to throw out stuff here that we may need to justify later, but things like... there's a more entrepreneurial model and the classic sort of stereotype of a vulnerable, chaotic drug-using British woman doesn't really hold anymore, with things like a lot of migrant sex workers using street work and just as a whole dynamic. You've got the whole conditionality of benefits and drug services, and da-da-da. So this is impacting upon the discourse that we use around street sex work, or it should be, we need to change that. This is just a brief description of the Leeds managed area just to say that that's what we were dealing with, it was defined by street and time; there's three streets and you can work within them or you can pick up clients between those three streets between night hours, seven pm to seven am I think it is; it has changed at various times. Those are the three main features, the removal of the arrest and a dedicated police officer and there's been some positive results out of that, increased violence reporting and better results from those reports of violence, so that's good. Easier access—and I've put “between services and sex workers” because I think what people promote it as is it's easier for sex workers to access health and social services whereas actually, if you contain a street sex worker within an area, what it really is, is easier for services to access those sex workers, not the other way around. The barriers for accessing services for sex workers are still the same, it's just we can find them easier; we don't have to look as hard and in as many varied places. What I would say is that the managed area does not reduce the risk of violence to street sex workers in Leeds because you cannot do business within the managed zone. And this essentially has displaced and upset the working

dynamics that existed before we had a managed zone, so if you like, when it was an unregulated red light district... obviously there was all kinds of balances there, risks of arrest and stuff, but there were known places where women took their clients that were used by other sex workers, there was informal monitoring between sex workers around safety. So basically, the displacement factors of the managed zone have impacted really dramatically upon the health and safety of sex workers because they can pick up their clients within the managed zone, but they have to take them out of the zone to do their business. What's happening is, they maybe are taking them home which is one of the moves that started to happen, or they were going to clients' homes more often or they were going into the nearby residential street [chuckles] and doing the business there which completely upset the local community. Surprise surprise! So we've got a standoff in Leeds between campaigning groups including SWARM and Save Our Eyes and we're all arguing over what the council should do next about how do you manage this zone and what does that mean. I went off around Europe on my Trust Fellowship, I wanted to look at what needed to happen to services that are delivered to street sex workers and how they needed to change their practise or improve their best practise. I wanted to explore how within the different legal frameworks and local authority arrangements—because we know that whatever law there is in a country, most local authorities have a certain amount of autonomy and most police authorities have a certain amount of autonomy to decide how they want to police those areas. In Leeds for instance, we have a managed zone, if you go to Hull sixty miles away you've got an exclusion zone where people have Section 20 orders to not enter what was previously known as the red-light district. You can have real contrasts within very small spaces, and the same is happening all over Europe, which I will get to.... Yeah, so basically, this impacts upon people's real-life experiences, their health and safety and stigmatisation. I travelled for six weeks originally and then five days a couple of years later, around those things I went and visited the first tippelzone in the Netherlands which is Utrecht, which is the model that was exported around Europe. I followed and I met up with people from ICRSE, I met people and activists from UTSOPI and STRASS, I spoke to sex workers in projects. I just basically went around and interviewed practitioners and service delivery organisations about their current problems, the commonalities, the differences, how their local authority is managing that and what problems does that bring up. I had a great time! I had a really nice time! Winston Churchill Trust were spot on! It can be lonely, six weeks on the road by yourself, but I had a good time. So basically this is not uncommon; what Leeds Council is dealing with is happening everywhere, visible spaces of sex work are the most contentious

areas, with less than approximately twenty percent of the sex working population using them, however in Europe we do have windows as well. It's the visible spaces that people campaign about. These are being increasingly contested and reduced across Europe in almost all situations I went to. This is the really important bit I want to say: there is an increased division in service provision between street sex workers and indoor or online sex workers—and in that I'm including windows as well. The important part about that is that most of the organisations or service providers that I went to visit were very aware of displaced zones where people who can't meet those particular regulations... obviously we know about the two-tier systems within regulation, but it doesn't just happen there. You've got people who are undocumented migrants, drug users are now finding displaced areas of sex work to work because they cannot meet the conditionality of certain tippelzones for example, or windows. Whereas the red-light zones in Europe that do still exist, the beat areas, are still the most dangerous, but what's interesting is that often, services are provided for them by separate organisations. You quite often find that the health or HAV or social will have a remit to work with the window population in Amsterdam and then you'll have a different project that works with the street workers in Utrecht. Anybody else who is selling sex at the back of the stations or in the parks or wherever, on the sides of roads and in truck stops or out of vans are not being reached by service provision. They're not within their remit and they are not being commissioned to do that either, so we've got this... what we've always said about two tiers, but this massive gap now between people who are not accessing health and social services. So—I just, this is my... this one and this one is my last thing. Tippelzones save lives. Sex boxes save lives, right? If we want to take anything, we're in danger, after these spaces are reduced, of not taking some of the learning that comes out of that. When you do want to manage an area of street sex—look, I'm not being funny. Is there anything wrong with that at the end of the road? They look like car ports. They save lives. Minimal investment if local authorities want to talk about cost, decreased local conflicts with local organisations and local communities, and basically, it's a really simple solution. If you want to actually value the lives of street sex workers then you can put minimal interventions in place where you've got living room projects on site, access to social and health support if you need it right there. At times when sex workers are working, so that is during sex working times not daytimes, and violence is minimal in a tippelzone. Let's not lose what we need to learn from those models, that's it. [Audience applauds]

00:27:28 LB Alright, I just wanted to point out how special it is to come across research that actually uses the knowledge there is in other countries; that is a really unique thing and I think especially as a Dutch person. I grew up literally next to one of those street walking areas that you're talking about and moving to Leeds, I lived in Nemeh 00:27:38 which has a street working area right next to the school I went to. That was a normal part of my life, absolutely, and to recognise that there is knowledge there that can be used here I think is a really unique project, so I really wanted to share that here. Now it's time for Nick to tell us about your research!

00:28:16 NM Thank you, thank you very much for inviting me here, it's a great honour to speak in an event like this. I wanted just to... in seven minutes I tend to speak a lot, and to be given a lot of time for talking as an academic, so I'll do my best to give you a very quick overview of a project I'm managing at the moment. Its main purpose is to gather the data on the four most strategic models of policy making in the global North about the impact of trafficking and sex work related policies on the lives and rights of migrant sex workers particularly. The countries are America, Australia, New Zealand and France; these countries were picked because they represent particular policy-making models, so we go in order of criminalisation. America is a place where sex work, apart from Nevada as we all know in some places, is criminalised in itself and so... France is a place where the law was pretty much like in the UK, so sex work in itself was legal but then a lot of activities around it were criminalised and so sex works were criminalised by proxy. Recently France has adopted, in 2016 actually, the so-called Swedish Model. And New Zealand is the country, which is mostly associated in the world with decriminalisation, but New Zealand is also a country where migrant sex workers cannot legally work. This is why we also decided to work in Australia, in particular in New South Wales which is the most inclusive decriminalised model in the world at the moment because it also includes migrants as people who can work legally. This means for example that if you are a student on a student visa and you can work twenty hours, you can work those twenty hours legally in any sex work venue, so that's a big difference. So I am managing the project, but in each place, there are researchers, many of whom are sex worker activists with experience of working with migrant sex workers. We try to liaise with grassroots, emerging often, organisations of migrant sex workers there because it's... in many countries there is a bit of a disconnect, not in all of them, between migrant sex workers and organisations in reality than those of the mainstream, so to speak, you know, organisations. In America we looked at New York and LA. In New York we

focused on the infamous human trafficking intervention courts which are basically alternatives to imprisonment in the name of abolitionist anti-trafficking. In a criminalised environment, migrant and non-migrant sex workers who would be criminalised are framed as victims and therefore given alternatives to detention. The sex work movement has been countering this and criticising these interventions because they seem to validate an oppressive system, making and enforcing people with mandatory sessions; instead of going to jail, you need to do mandatory sessions. These sessions are very broad, and they can include from yoga classes to two-hour psycho-social rehabilitation. Some of them are very oppressive, some of them are a bit more liberating, and I'm not talking so much about the yoga but for example, some stigmatised populations like trans, Latina, migrant sex workers, sometimes because of these mandatory sessions get access to health services they wouldn't have gotten access to otherwise. This doesn't mean of course that this is the right way for people to get access to these services, and so we are looking at the advantages and disadvantages of a system and a country in which welfare doesn't exist the way we know it in Europe. Sometimes there is this penal welfare attitude, sometimes you find people speaking or pretending to speak in the name of migrant and non-migrant sex workers saying, "Well at least if we do this then they get something." This is something we are looking into in New York. In LA there isn't this, in LA there's a much higher degree of deportation and people are not even offered these humanitarian alternatives. In the context of Trump coming the situation has deteriorated a lot: people are deported before they even get to these courts, and so now we are reflecting together with sex worker organisations on how to re-frame this critique, because sometimes these courts are the only places where people can have a shred of an opportunity to access these rights, with all the limitations I discussed. In France we collaborated with Doctors of The World, Médecins du Monde, and we did big research on the impact of the 2016 law. It was an announced disaster; sex workers knew before, and of course the results of these reports confirmed what we knew. Migrant and non-migrant sex workers became more precarious economically, the negotiation of safe sex and protection from violence became very difficult. People had to go underground away from places where they felt safer, clients who were safer stopped going to see sex workers, and also a lot of people, from fear of being deported, particularly trans Latina women, they stopped going to receive treatment for HIV and AIDS. There's been a surge of AIDS proper in contemporary France, where this treatment is available for free. I have to say without mincing my words that the law has been a catastrophe and it's been also tied in with the enforcement of a law to legitimise a crackdown on particularly visible

migrants like Nigerian women who are associated with trafficking. And yet, in the name of this fight then, they became more visible and more targeted. In New Zealand, we worked with the New Zealand Collective of Prostitutes and together with them we started to focus on the reality for migrants trying to build the evidence that we need, they need, to make the case for the inclusion of migrants in the Prostitution Reform Act. It was very unexpected, but because of the 2017 electoral climate which was very much focused on a New Zealand first rhetoric, there's been a crackdown on immigration in New Zealand which is ongoing, and this has impacted the research to an extent that we are no longer able to interview migrant sex workers in New Zealand. It's very, very difficult because they get to be deported very quickly, because of the illegality of it. What happens also in New Zealand is, I was at the migrant sex worker panel today, these racialised hierarchies came to the fore, there was a lot of white backlash against migrant sex workers in the media saying, "They come here to steal our jobs." I think these dynamics are not exclusive to the sex industry, this is what happens with unregulated regular markets, so we don't have to pathologize the sex industry as a place that is particularly racist, which I think it isn't to be honest, on the contrary. But it was interesting that it was this white formation of these hierarchies in New Zealand and we never hear a lot of criticism on New Zealand for all the right reasons, but because this is a safe space, I think maybe we can talk about it. Last but not least, in Australia, we built the research on existing research, Australia has got very important peer-based research that we built on, and we followed the controversies that were more emerging there. We focused on the realities of Asian women working in massage parlours in New South Wales and in Victoria, two very different systems. In Victoria it's more about regulation, whereas in New South Wales it's a decriminalised environment; we focused on this population because it became the centre of controversies in the media. In Australia, the situation is very dynamic because although sex workers have hardly earned a lot of rights, there are constant revisions and petitions to change it from the abolitionist perspectives. Non-authorized, because in Sydney you don't get a license, you get an authorisation from the councils, but non-authorized brothels were problematised as a place of endemic exploitation, so we looked into that. We didn't find any difference whatsoever in the level of exploitation or non-exploitation between authorised and non-authorized places, which means that the claims of abolitionist people are wrong, to be nuanced. [Audience laughs] And so, I don't know how much time I've got? Maybe I can wrap it up here? I'm sorry, this is just a very quick snapshot of the project, and I'm happy to respond to whatever other questions that you have. [Audience applauds]

00:38:00 ?? How are we doing with this here? Can I get there?

00:38:02 NM Let me move. Move somewhere else.

00:38:07 LB Would you like to sit or stand?

00:38:10 NA I'll stand actually I think.

00:38:11 LB Alright. Here you go.

00:38:12 NA Thank you. Okay, I was going to speak, I'm speaking about a particular piece of research, but I wanted to make a couple of points about research in general. This is the research, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a job like this?" and it compares sex work with other jobs commonly done by women. I have to start by saying we are not a research body; we are a grassroots collective of sex workers and we only embarked on this because we thought it was really needed. It was really needed for the movement for decriminalisation and it was really needed to counter what was happening on a governmental and on other levels. We started on it at the time when the Home Affairs Select Committee has come out saying that sex workers on the street and in premises should be decriminalised, and the government response to that was that it was concerned about the exploitative nature of sex work. We thought, okay, let's look at exploitation, but let's look at exploitation in sex work in the context of and in comparison to the jobs that are often the alternatives to sex work. It was a small-scale study, I kind of thought, God, this is a really small scale study but then I looked around and in fact a lot of academic studies are also very small, and they really talk them up, so I thought okay, [audience laughs] let's go for it! And also, what we did do though to protect ourselves from the accusation that it was so few people, we actually looked to what extent the findings that we got were corroborated with others. That's all in the report. And in fact, that is actually a very interesting piece of reading because everything we found was also backed up by a few other... individually, not the whole thing, but individually other studies. We did semi-structured, face to face.... I found out what all this meant as I was doing it, and telephone interviews with sixteen women and one non-binary person who performs their job in the capacity of a woman about various aspects of their work. In fact, we used Karl Marx's questions for the Workers Inquiry, if you ever want to have a look at some

good questions, that's one that I like the best. The women and non-binary person spanned a working age from eighteen to sixty-five years old and they included five migrant workers, three women of colour and women with a variety of physical and mental disabilities. All the migrant women had status in the UK and just under half the interviewees are mothers. One woman is not formally employed but was a single mother with a young child and was on benefits, we took her benefits as a wage and compared that. So what did we find? Now the first one is going to make you fall off your chairs, we found that sex workers earn more than other women. [audience laughs] I know! Again, all the figures are in the report, I'm not going to go into those. We also found that sex workers worked less hours than other women workers. Between that and the flexibility of the job and the fact that childcare is so expensive, it was quite a good body of evidence to show why so many mothers go into sex work, which we thought was important. We found that the wages in non-sex work jobs are very low. [Audience laughs] I know, I'm sorry. I mean, it's a bit amazing that this have never been done before I have to say. But a quarter of the women in our study earned less than the minimum wage, not the living wage, the minimum wage, and two-thirds were earning less than the living wage. The salaried workers, because we interviewed a midwife and a teacher, you know people that had public sector jobs on a salary, but we found that their hourly wage was much lower than advertised or than it would be expected to be, because they were expected to do overtime and they had no choice about the matter. And if you counted those hours of overtime that were regular and routine and weekly, in fact their hourly rate was a lot less. The single mum was paid less and she was living in destitution much of the time. But the other thing that we found that was quite interesting really is that even though the street based sex worker was the only one to say that she experienced direct deliberate violence, other people did experience violence from clients or if they were working in a hostel or something like that. She was the only one that said she experienced deliberate violence; there was violence in other jobs but there was an enormous amount of injury and abuse and people had absolutely no legal redress against it in most cases. Sex workers didn't because of the criminalised nature of our work, but neither did other workers and that was really striking. Zero-hour contracts were an absolute disaster, had decimated people's lives. The thing that... one of the women described it like you're renegotiating your contract every single second of the day, you're always having to suck up to your boss, you're always having in mind, "What do you need to do today to ensure that you get the hours for next week?" So levels of exploitation, injury, abuse and discrimination had massively soared with zero-hour contracts and of course, people had not even basic statutory labour rights.

Finally, I think, the biggest other finding was that criminalisation of sex work undermined sex workers' ability to work safely, to get access to the same rights of other workers; I know none of that is extraordinary, but it was a very good process to do it. I wanted to say what we really found out from it in some ways is that, first of all we felt in a much stronger position to speak to parliamentarians and others and answer the idea that sex work is uniquely exploitative; it's clearly not. And to really lay out what the choices are, that exploitation and abuse is very widespread and it's a really unspoken about issue for people, for women in particular. You know, sexual harassment is absolutely rampant and very few people have enough leverage to do anything about it. In fact, Women Against Rape and the Bakers Union have just recently started a big campaign about sexual harassment in precarious work, in fast food and other similar industries, I'm hoping that that's really going to bring it out in a way that is needed. That it was a very good way of re-looking at who sex workers are; we often get tied up in a debate of whether sex work is work and in some ways what the research did is bypassed that whole discussion and just located sex workers alongside other workers. It ignored the question and just established the fact, in some ways. And the fact also that so many sex workers are mums and the reasons behind that, the actual practical financial reasons behind that was very revealing and a very easy way of explaining it. I also thought that one of the best things that came out of the research was that it started to look at the ways in which we're all connected. So the fact is, if McDonald's workers win an extra pound an hour on their wages then less women are going to have to go into those... you have more chances of not having to go into sex work if that's what you want. If we start to make progress with decriminalisation, if we push back against the criminalisation and abuse that sex workers are facing, then you're in a better position not to have to go and do the McDonald's jobs; we're really in the same struggle together. As we win victories in one place, it actually benefits others! I think also—good, I'm glad you helped me with that—the other thing is that I think we established that work isn't glamorous [audience chuckles]. I know, sorry, a bit obvious as well, but people always talk about the 'Happy Hookers' and we always get asked, we're the only ones that ever get asked, "Do you love your job?" Well no we don't, but then nobody else does either! You know, I think that was a quite... some of the people that spoke at the launch, we launched it in parliament and some men stood up and spoke about their work and the horrors of that. I think it's a good push against this feminist idea that the route to our liberation is a job and to crawl our way up the career ladder because it really dismantles this idea that that's what we all want and that there's something good or glamorous about that. I thought also it was a very good... we're constantly obsessed

with how we're going to progress with our demand for an end to criminalisation and for decriminalisation, so I think it put us in a much stronger position to do that. The government research is due to come out soon and by that time we want there to be a better position to push back against whatever they're planning to do, including the Nordic model, God forbid. We were very appreciative of Amnesty International's research, because not only did it deal with criminalisation it also dealt with poverty and resources and demanded that states actually tackle that. I think that has to be part of our demand that we demand back the wealth that our work has created. On the one hand, that we're pushing for decriminalisation but we're also pushing against poverty and for alternatives and I think the research really helped put us in a better position to do that. [Audience whoops and applauds]

00:48:27 ?? [off mic] There's one chair over here, and can we move that chair over here?

00:48:30 ?? Yes. Careful with chair moving.

00:48:32 ?? And then nobody has to sit on the far side.

00:48:34 ?? Just be comfortable.

00:48:42 LB Then nobody is, you know, pushed away by being on the other side of the projector. First of all I really want to thank you all. I will admit that I just interviewed or invited people whose research I wanted to hear more about, but I also think that you really showed the wide spectrum of research. I think for people who don't do research it often feels like research is, one, saying what we already know, two, sometimes really weirdly specific and you're thinking, how can that ever be useful, right? I've definitely felt that way, and I will admit some research isn't, absolutely, but a lot of research is done by people who want to put knowledge that sex workers already have in the hands of people who can make change in a way that their change will be taken seriously. I think that for most researchers I know in this field is the motivation. I also want to say there's a lot of researchers I also wanted to have here, I can see some faces in the room where I'm just like, oh shit, I wanted to hear about your research to, and yours too!

00:49:52 NM And yours Lilith!

00:49:53 LB One day, when it's done, I'll talk about it later, but it's not done yet. Questions. Do any of you want to share anything about what is unique about researching sex work? Things you need to keep in mind, things you absolutely shouldn't do? I see some laughing....

00:50:15 RB Yeah, this is something that I always wrestle with because of the ways that I know about this issue. Sometimes I don't want to be an instrument that informs the state to then create harmful policies, and I know I've spoken to researchers and sex workers and practitioners about this for decades. About what the hell are we doing, because facts don't seem to matter to the people who can overthrow duress and overthrow policy around harm reduction and rights and emancipation. On the other hand you're balancing that there are unique stories that pose unique counter-narratives that need to be in the public domain at least, so that policy makers, politically elite, cannot claim ignorance. I think that's the only strand that I'm able to cling to, one of the only strands that keeps me, "Okay, we gotta do this." But then the other piece is that it's a very slow-moving form of activism and change, so yeah, that's me.

00:51:22 LB [off mic] Does anybody else want to add anything?

00:51:31 NM I've been working on research projects with marginalised migrant groups before and I think that the sex industry and people working in it are an opportunity to understand the complexity of labour and exploitation more broadly in our societies, and how stigmatisation works. And to be perfectly honest, to meet fantastic people that you don't meet in other sectors of research.

00:52:00 LB [off mic] Alright, brilliant, some questions from the room please?

00:52:08 Q1 Okay, hi, thank you so much to begin with for letting us listen to your research, amazing. My name is Martha, I'm from Norway, I'm a sex worker and also a researcher. As many people in the room know, Amnesty International did a report which is called the 'Human Cost of Crushing the Market'. It was a very good report, it had a lot of impact on the public discourse, however, what we find in Norway now is that abolitionists or 'the antis' are saying that it's not worth the paper that it's written on. They completely disregard it and say that, also, "It's paid for by the pimp lobby," obviously. My question is,

how do we legitimise our own research? I mean, I do research and people tell me that, "Oh you only write that because you're a prostitute." And I'm like, well yes actually, yes, that is why I'm doing research on this. I need to do research; I need to bring this up. And so, we all have bias, everyone does as researchers, as sex workers, as humans, but how do we legitimise our research, defend our research when this is what they throw against us?

00:53:25 CH I'm going to respond to that, and it might be the naive response if you like, but I think that's okay, and I would say you just declare it. You declare where you stand and you make that really explicit, because that's what people don't do otherwise, and actually, you know, we've had these conversations with many of the people in this room before but research is supposed to be an iterative process as far as I learned on my Masters. Each research question should inform the next research question, so just declare that! We need to keep saying to people, follow the evidence, stop listening to people who are going, "We're pimp lobby," we're working from evidence and we're building evidence upon evidence. You know, that's what I'd say.

00:54:15 NM Yes, I mean that's a dilemma isn't it? It should be enough, it should be a validation that you speak from the community that you're studying, so that in itself should be making what you say more important than anybody else. But because that is not the case for all the wrong reasons, I think the best chance we have is to have allies, alliances with sex workers and non-sex workers, researchers, and play that game sometimes in countries where being out delegitimises the credibility of the research. It's a very sad, strategic, essentialist kind of game, but in some places it's maybe... the sex worker movement for many years had spokespeople who were not out, so sometimes there's also that. But at the same time I think both researchers should just be defended and people should be called out for saying, "Well because you're a sex worker then you have a stake in it and you're not objective," that's totally unacceptable. People should be called out and criticised in public because it's just ridiculous. If you think about it, say this was about another social group. Can you imagine if this was about a racialised minority? That would be a racist thing and it is actually the same thing, it's just that people get away with it when it's sex work.

00:55:43 RB That was the reason why I entered academics, because I was tired of hitting and being excluded and marginalised and being told that our critical analysis was biased, and we're all positioned partisan and impartial. I wanted to find a way to straddle both worlds

and a lot of different worlds, because that way I can defend a bit differently, because I have the same education as you do. I'm saying the same shit I said, Google me! Twenty years ago, I'm saying the same shit I'm saying now! Honestly, it's just we have to find ways to make stronger arguments and do truly position yourself within your work because it's okay.

00:56:22 NA I think there's two things actually. I think that the Amnesty research is bound to be attacked because it has been such a useful tool for our movement for decriminalisation, and if it wasn't attacked, they would be stupid. Of course that would be the first thing that you would do if you were trying to discredit it and I don't know that that accusation against it can be tackled bureaucratically taking into consideration what people have said about, "There are some things you can practically do," like declare your interest. But you can't deal with it bureaucratically and say, well, because they attack it, because it's supposedly not independent enough, then I'm going to do A, B and C." I think you just have to tackle it head on in the ways that have been suggested and say, it is completely legitimate and completely right in its own right. Just defend it in the way that you would have to defend all of the other things that we have that are useful tools for our movement. Saying that, I do also think there is a place, and remember the women in Canada said when they were doing that Canada case, they said that some of the research had a much higher status in front of the court because it was somebody that was clearly not a sex worker as far as they knew. Which is good, and it does mean that we have a right, as sex workers, to demand from academics that they do the research that we need, because then they can do it, take the credit for it, have the status for it but at least it's useful to us. I think that is a real problem that we do face, you know, there's not enough connection between the sex work movement and academics and there's not enough accountability in terms of doing the research that is needed. I still find it scandalous that in the UK we still don't know how many sex workers are mums, you know? How many millions of us have gone into sex work research when we still don't know that one simple fact? I think there's quite a lot more to do on that.

00:58:29 LB [off mic] Great. Other questions?

00:58:35 Q2 Thank you, I really enjoyed that, thank you. One of the things that obviously everybody here is concerned with and is facing is stigma against sex workers and just how limiting and destructive that can be, but there has been some research come out recently that suggests that even the academics who research sex work experience considerable

levels of stigma and prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. A stigma by association, that's how bad it is. So I wondered if you could all perhaps talk a little bit about that, have you experienced stigma and discrimination just by the nature of researching sex work?

00:59:10 LB I'm going to be really cheeky and answer this even though I'm not on the panel; I do my research in a Business School, it is exactly as strait-laced as you would expect. I have a very good relationship with my colleagues, I like them a lot, we talk a lot, we talk every day obviously because we share an office. I have been asked in the year and a half that I've been doing my research about how my research is going once, by one colleague, because they don't know how to speak about this topic. So there's that! I'm not noting any repercussions yet, we'll see, but it is a very tangible thing for me.

00:59:52 CH I was just going to say, Kate, why don't you answer your own question? [laughs] Your association with the movement has put you up for some flack, so why don't you answer it yourself, you tell us!

01:00:10 RB Yeah, that's very interesting because also the way that people feel entitled to ask us questions about our own journeys, also the way that race and gender and research in white academic institutions intersect especially if you're doing sex work research. They're not entitled to our journeys or our motivations, they're entitled to interrogate our research and draw from it and learn from it instead of all these ad hominem attacks. I believe I was the only person in my department doing sex work research and it was very, very marginalising and isolating, but I actually went in expecting that. Living that for three years was very—those of you who know me know the journey.

01:00:54 NM Yes, I mean Sociology is a bit easier and my experience is very different, because I'm not a sex worker and I'm male and I'm gay, I think the fact that I'm gay cuts me some slack when it comes down to critiquing my position, and also people are a bit more careful in confronting me head on about that. I think that it depends on where you want to be, if you want to be in a very normative university place then it's a disadvantage, but if you want to just have a political job and be useful for people then it's quite a vibrant interesting and fantastic dynamic to work in. What I was not prepared on was to be labelled as a part of the pimp lobby and being seen as a trafficking denier when the sex work movement have been criticising me for talking too much about trafficking all the time. Then I learned from the

sex worker activist friends of mine that I should wear this as a badge of honour, that I'm basically Julie Bindel's hate-pet, you know? They told me, "Welcome to the club!" It's politics isn't it? We cannot escape politics.

01:02:19 Q3 Thank you, thanks. Thanks to the panel, really, really interesting. I'm on the email chain of the Sex Worker Research Hub, which I think is a really interesting email chain to be part of because it shows the absolute chasm that exist. This is a question. So there was this—a bunch of us were talking about this before—there's so much money being put into—I'm just going to be honest because I'm not a researcher—shitty research, like, "Oh, I'm writing a paper on females that buy sex." No one gives a shit! It doesn't exist! [audience applauds and laughs] But what really angers me is something I think that Raven spoke about, there was a question that was, "I want to write a paper on policing strategies that sex workers use to keep themselves safe," and nobody, apart from people that work with sex workers and are sex workers, no one said shit apart from me and someone else, to say, "This is dangerous, you are putting sex workers lives at risk." How can you publicly write a paper that says the things that people do to keep themselves safe and also use the work policing to do that. It actually really angered me because I thought there were all these academics going, "This paper's good, this paper's good," and it's like, you are accountable to these people that you see as little lab rats to get your funding. And I'm asking, how can we bridge that chasm? Because I've been to Sex Worker Research Hub events and there is a line where people sit on one side and people sit on the other, do you know what I mean? And like—I mean, this is like a part rant because it is really dangerous to do this and this is where the money is going; this is where the funding is going. As people that are researchers and have a level of authority and accountability, how can you ensure that your colleagues and other people keep people safe? You know? Does what I'm saying make sense? Yeah, so thanks!

01:04:37 RB Very short. I use the academic world as leverage to then come back into the community so I don't think... some of this does apply because I do wrestle with that but I'm not in an academic role for that reason and lots of reasons around that. But I also recognise that people are blending different identities, so some people just can't be out, some people... it's a sliver of the population, but it is part of the academic population, people that live the experience and can't be out.

01:05:10 NM I'm a co-chair of the Sex Worker Research Hub and I thought your remark on that particular research was quite helpful and needed. There's very different ways of... I think we should encourage this exchange because it leads to more ethical research, and more useful research, it's just that there are different communication cultures within academia [audience member laughs] and people can feel very touchy. For example, some people can be very touchy. I would welcome a rant which I don't think is what you did because I rant myself quite a lot, but other people can be a bit more touchy. We need to go in that direction for sure because it's the most important thing, that the research we do is valuable and not harmful to the people that we are supposed to know more about and work with, and accountable to, of course.

01:06:10 LB I really, really wish we could answer a hundred more questions, but we are actually out of time, I'm very sorry. I think maybe take your questions to Twitter? I think that would be a really good idea, if people are willing to I think it's a great place for communities and activists and researchers to connect, I think we all use it that way as well, that is the first thing I want to do. Secondly, I'm going to do a really cheeky thing, I'm going to do some promo of my own research, [audience laughs and growns] I checked with our dear organiser to see if it's okay and I'm doing this for a reason. My research is on third parties in sex work which there isn't any research on yet and it's quite necessary. As many of us know, third parties are criminalised through brothel-keeping laws in England. If you are, or know, or think you might know but you're not sure, any sex workers who work in England occasionally or all the time, can you go to this link and share it on social medias? I've managed to talk my university into paying money for every participant, so the more people take part, the more money goes to... you can pick one of four organisations: SWARM, obviously, the ECP, Crosstalk and National Ugly Mugs, so you can pick one of those four at the end and my university will pay for it. So, I just want to ask you, take a picture, please share this with all your networks, please fill in the questionnaire. It's closing very soon, in about a week, so do that stuff, I would be very thankful. Mostly, I want to thank the amazing panel. I am so stoked that you're all here. You've been amazing, I loved the focus on accountability and on practical use of the research. It's just been really impressive, so thank you all so much, and thanks for the questions! [Audience whoops and applauds]

[End of recording]

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