

How is sex work  
similar to other kinds  
of work how is it  
different does the fact  
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[Sociology](#)



The paper "Sex Work: The Female Body as an Autonomous Commodity" is an exceptional example of a literature review on sociology. Openly expressing one's sexuality, such as being sensual in public, is often taboo for many societies that regard sexuality as a purely private domain. Sex work is one of the most controversial concerns of feminists, governments, and the public because of the latter's different views on women's sexuality and its "proper" expression and boundaries. Sex work is the same as other jobs, if people accept it as another kind of labor, and if society accepts the human body as an autonomous commodity. It is different from other kinds of work because of social norms regarding female sexual identities, and it is not the same as sex trafficking because sex workers feel empowered in their opposition to traditional gender expectations. Moreover, sex work's legalization matters because sex workers deserve legal protections and benefits, as well as social validation that their work is not demeaning, but another type of acceptable labor. Sex work is similar to other kinds of work if sex is treated as a form of labor and if the body represents an independent commodity. D'Emilio (2004) described that workers are "free laborers" because they can freely look for work, they have the ability to work, and they can get paid for their work (p. 216). Sex work, if seen in the same logic, is similar to any kind of labor. An example is getting paid for painting a part of the house. The painter and sex worker both offer labor that another person is willing to pay for. In addition, sex work is like other jobs if the body is perceived as an autonomous commodity. For example, if people can be paid to carry and bring another person's baggage, which makes their body a commodity to the latter, likewise, a sex worker offers different kinds of

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sexual activities to another person, thereby transforming their bodies to commodities too. Dudash (2004) documented her experience when she immersed in sex work as a peepshow dancer. She and co-workers danced in the nude with customers looking at them through small windows. She interviewed dancers, wherein one of them, Damiana, asserted that she saw her body as a commodity, so she has the right to get paid for any service that concerns using her body and that she agrees to (Dudash, 2004, p. 238). Free will or consent is essential for sex work to be the same as other kinds of work. Sex workers must not be forced or manipulated in doing their jobs. Autonomy gives them the perception that their job is like any other kind of work that has a willing customer who will pay for it at the right price, place, and time.

Sex work is different, nevertheless, from other kinds of work because society limits women's sexual identities. Society does not limit painters and carpenters, for instance. They can offer their labor legally to anyone. On the contrary, society constricts women's sexual identities, as it puts women in their proper place by creating gender-based norms and behaviors. Martin and Collinson (2004) examined how organizations socially produce and reinforce sexuality in the workplace. They argued that sexual harassment happens because some men see women as sexual commodities that they can own, use, or exploit anytime. These men harass women because their cultures and organizations "normalize" this behavior as a "fact of life" and a "bit of fun" (Martin & Collinson, 2004, p. 226). Sex work, subsequently, does not have large social acceptance because society does not approve of women's active sexuality. If men are sexually licentious, society deems it

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acceptable. If women are getting paid for sex work, society calls them whores and sluts. Sex work is the kind of work that demonstrates that society continues to expect women to behave according to socially-approved gender codes. Society does not support women who are open and active regarding their sexuality, so it does not want to legalize sex work too. Sex work suffers from a lack of social acceptance because of social norms about women's sexuality.

In addition, sex work is different from sexual trafficking because sex workers do not see themselves as exploited, and instead, they demonstrate resistance against expected female sexual values and behaviors. Sex workers partake in sexual activities with their complete knowledge and free will. They are independent enough to fight men who see their work as shameful to them and their male customers, as well as customers who are disrespectful. Dudash (2004) described the different ways that peepshow dancers resisted misogynist men. An example is when the dancers created a "Dear Sincere" letter to reply to a customer who said that dancers neglected him when he knocked on their windows. The letter underlined that dancers hated gesturing, knocking on windows, and other overt demeaning behaviors. The letter symbolizes that these sex workers will not tolerate any action or word that humiliates them as human beings. Their nude dancing is paid, but not their dignities.

The legalization of sex work should matter because sex workers deserve the kind of legal protections and benefits accorded to other legal forms of work and social validation for sex work as another form of acceptable labor. Sex workers experience exploitation because their job is not legal in many states.

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Legalization should matter because it will provide sex workers legal protections and benefits as legitimate employees of the sex industry. They can make complaints, for instance, regarding sexual harassment, because they own their bodies too. They can set boundaries, which, when customers violate, the latter must be punished, according to the law. In addition, legalizing sex work gives a form of social validation that sex work is work too. Legalizing it does not necessarily mean that the whole society will support it, but at least, it will show that the state sees sex work as something valid enough to be accepted as legal work. Sex workers may still feel being socially denigrated because of their job, but, at the minimum, they have the state to support the kind of work that they feel empowers them.

Sex workers see their bodies as personal properties, which they can sell as a commodity. Sex workers agree to sex work, just like any job, and would like to have legal protections too. Sex work is different, nevertheless, from other work because it faces social denigration. Society limits women's sexuality, thereby invalidating sex work as legal work. As a result, sex workers experience challenges in opposing restrictions on what they can do with their bodies. Sex workers persist that their human bodies are autonomous commodities that they can use as they want without being harassed or debased. Thus, what others may see as a whore may actually see herself as a feminist, who is fighting oppressive gender codes and boundaries.