

Selling sexual services in neo-liberal times: a feminist  
economics perspective  
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# Structure of talk

- Has capitalism won? Why are we asking this question now?
- A review of debates about sex work within the feminist literature
- A review of empirical studies which throw light on different feminist positions
- Reviewing these positions in the light of this evidence

# Has capitalism won? And why are we asking this now?

- Prostitution described as the 'oldest profession in the world'? So why are we asking this question? And why now?
- Changing nature of capitalism: the move from Keynesian management of the economy to the neo-liberal model
- Changing nature of the market in sexual services: the move from economies based on maximizing production to economies based maximizing consumption
- Changing nature of demand: the construction of a consumer market for sexual services

# Studies of the supply of sexual services

- A highly segmented labour market
- Evidence of choice, evidence of coercion but most often a form of 'constrained choice' with varying degrees of constraints and varying degrees of choice
- Nature of skills and strategies: other-directed and self-directed
- Risks, danger and control
- Subversion and conformity

## Conclusions

- Criminalizing prostitution criminalizes some of the world's poorest women
- But does decriminalization provide the answer?
- Should we support the commodification of sexual services?
- Has capitalism won?