EXPLORING DIRTY RESEARCH IN ACADEMIA: IS MY RESEARCH DIRTY?
Researching the legal boundaries of gay BDSM sex.

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What is Dirty Work?

There are three types of dirty work:
1. Physical – jobs that include dangerous elements or jobs that are physically dirty;
2. Social – work linked to stigmatized populations;
3. Moral – work that is seen as morally compromised by society. (Hughes, 1951)

Therefore the stigma attached to dirty work is transferred to those who perform dirty work, and in turn they are treated as dirty workers (Grandy, 2008, p.179). Dirty work is not viewed by societies as unimportant or trivial, instead the stigma comes from the view of the work as distasteful if not disgusting, as necessary but polluting, as threatening to the moral order (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1994, p.418).

Can Academia be classed as dirty work?

While academia may not seem like dirty work, researching certain 'unloved groups' within 'certain academic environments may be problematic for researchers, leaving them vulnerable to being socially tainted, and in some cases rendering them 'dirty workers' within their field' (Sanders-McDonagh, 2014, p.242). Irvine would argue that in particular sexualities research is classed as dirty research, stating that sociologists who study sexualities report challenges to their professional and personal identities in the form of snide comments, jokes, assumptions about their sexuality and challenges to the legitimacy of sexuality research overall (2014, p.639).
Marvin and Grandy (2013, p.239) have stated there is a struggle of professional identity for researchers who engage in 'quirky research', worrying about whether the subject will be taken seriously, what colleagues would think, and whether doing research on dirty work transfers the stigma to the researchers doing it. This is further highlighted by McCormack (2013, 2014) who states that it is imperative to explore how to enable scholars working at the boundaries of sexual norms to make an impact without undue risk and stigma.
However, Chapkis (2010) contends that however 'engaged' researchers are, they are still privileged because they can 'walk away' and that is not always an option for research participants. Thus suggesting that dirty work cannot be classed as dirty work.

My research:

My research looks at gay males who act/ self-identify within the BDSM community. I am looking at the boundaries of gay BDSM and the inherent bias in the law.
Using Rubins (1984) charmed circle I aim to argue that although homosexuality has been brought into the inner circle much like heterosexuality, those that are both homosexual and engage in BDSM are pushed back into the outer limits, unlike heterosexuals that practice BDSM.
This is of particular importance when considering the criminality of BDSM. As Acts once considered grossly offence and disgusting by the general public, and thus pushed to the outer limits, are no longer classified in that manner (*R v Walsh (Unreported)*, *R v Peacock (Unreported)*). However, as neither case reached the Court of Appeal or higher no precedent has been set and therefore both cases could be said to be anomalies to which the law does not have to follow.
Khan (2014, p.226) argues that sexual orientation (*R v Wilson (1998) 2 Cr App Rep 241*) and marital status (*R v Emmett [1999] EWCA Crim 1710*) can have an impact on judicial tolerance of BDSM practice. This is further emphasized in *Mosley v News Group Newspapers Limited [2008] EWHC 1777 (QB)*, while this was a civil case the issue of criminality was addressed but then dismissed by Justice Eady who stated 'it would hardly be appropriate to clutter up the courts with cases of spanking between consenting adults' (para. 117).
While no legal comparisons can be made, it is interesting how the CPS handled both *Mosley* and *Walsh,* as in the former a heteronormative male who engaged in several acts of BDSM in which criminality was dismissed, and in the latter, the homosexual defendant was sought out by the police and prosecuted by the CPS.
This research will be of qualitative nature, utilizing queer theory in which I will seek to explore the boundaries of BDSM through lived sex experiences of self-identified gay male practitioners. I plan to conduct semi-structured interviews.

My research continued:

This research will be of qualitative nature, utilizing queer theory in which I will seek to explore the boundaries of BDSM through lived sex experiences of self-identified gay male practitioners. I have gatekeepers in the community and from this I anticipate utilizing snowball sampling which will allow me to conduct semi-structured interviews.
Within the gay BDSM community it is common practice to hold separate/secret accounts on social media specifically for their BDSM identity. For my research I have built links with these personas via social media which in turn has associated both socially and morally with this community.

How to navigate a dirty work reputation:

- Reframing – which involves transforming the meaning attached to the stigmatized work by infusing it with positive value or neutralizing the negative value.
- Recalibrating – which involves shifting the value of the job components so that more value is placed upon certain aspects of the job while minimizing the other, more tainted aspects.
- Refocusing – which involves redirecting attention to non-stigmatized features of the dirty so as to actively overlook the stigmatized attributes.
- Social weighting – which involves actively selecting referent others with which to compare the dirty worker's job and elevate her status.

Table of Cases:
Mosley v News Group Newspapers Limited [2008] EWHC 1777 (QB)
R v Emmett [1999] EWCA Crim 1710
R v Peacock (Unreported)
R v Walsh (Unreported)
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