

QUEERING SEX WORK AND MOBILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: HOW DOES MIGRATION/MOBILITY/MOVEMENT INFLUENCE GENDERED SEXUALITIES IN SEX WORK?

Ntokozo Yingwana^{1*}

¹*African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS), Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, ntokozoyingwana@gmail.com*

(*Main presenter and corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

Drawing from a doctoral thesis with a similar title, this paper explores the intersections of sex work, mobility and gendered sexualities through a queer lens. Based on the Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) methodology the study made use of digital-storytelling and the instant messaging platform WhatsApp to engage 17 migrant and mobile/transient sex workers who were at the time of the study based in South Africa (2019-2020). Through a queering of sex work and migration/mobility/movement analysis we learn that because sex work is essentially about using one's body to perform varying sexual acts with different types of people for financial gain, a migrant/mobile sex worker is exposed to different ways of experiencing sexual (dis)pleasure. According to the research participants this can then broaden the body's erotic vocabulary and expand one's range of sexual desires, along with their expressions; to the point whereby it can also have an influence on one's gendered sexuality and choice of intimate partner. However, the respondents also stressed the integral role movement plays in this evolution of one's gendered sexuality. Hence, this paper argues for the recognition of migrant/mobile sex work as intrinsically queer, and concludes by unpacking the socio-political implications of this in relation to (sexual) citizenship.

Keywords: sex work, migration, mobility, queer, sexuality, gender

Author's biography:

Ntokozo Yingwana is a researcher and PhD candidate with the African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her main passion lies in gender, sexuality, and sex worker rights' activism in Africa. She has worked for the Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT), and occasionally consults the South African movement of sex workers called Sisonke, the African Sex Worker Alliance, and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects.