Panel Proposal: “Methodological Challenges and Stigma by Proxy: Researching Sex Work in Repressive Policy Contexts”

Abstract:

This panel critically examines the methodological challenges, ethical dilemmas, and epistemological implications of researching sex work in contexts with repressive prostitution policies, such as Sweden. By centering the lived experiences of researchers and participants, we highlight how structural injustices, legal frameworks, and societal stigmas shape the research process. A recurring theme is the phenomenon of “stigma by proxy,” where researchers are indirectly stigmatized or face institutional barriers due to their engagement with marginalized communities. This panel brings together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to explore the intersection of methodological challenges and the political stakes of knowledge production on sex work.

Proposed Themes and Objectives:

1. Methodological Challenges:

• Navigating access to criminalized or marginalized populations in contexts of criminalized sex work.

• Ethical dilemmas in ensuring participant safety, consent, and anonymity.

• Balancing advocacy with scholarly objectivity in politically charged environments.

2. Implications for Knowledge Production:

• The impact of repressive prostitution policies on the availability and reliability of data.

• The role of cultural and legal narratives in shaping research findings and dissemination.

• Addressing gaps and biases in existing scholarship on sex work and injustice.

3. Stigma by Proxy:

• Researchers’ experiences of institutional skepticism, funding barriers, or professional ostracism due to their work.

• Strategies for managing stigma and negotiating credibility in the academic and policy realms.

Panel Chair and Format:

The panel will be chaired by [Insert Name], who has extensive experience in sex work research. The session will include a moderated discussion to foster dialogue between panelists and the audience, focusing on strategies for overcoming research barriers.

Significance:

This panel will contribute to critical discussions about the intersections of law, stigma, and methodology in sex work research. It aims to bridge the gap between scholarly inquiry and advocacy, fostering a more inclusive and ethical approach to studying marginalized communities.