

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Non-Technical Summary

A 1000 word (maximum) summary of the main research results, in non-technical language, should be provided below. The summary might be used by ESRC to publicise the research. It should cover the aims and objectives of the project, main research results and significant academic achievements, dissemination activities and potential or actual impacts on policy and practice.

In 2001, we were commissioned by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs to lead a multi-country pilot study of the demand for migrant domestic and sex workers and its connections to the phenomenon of trafficking in four countries (Sweden, Italy, Thailand and India). In 2002 we obtained funding from the ESRC to extend and develop this pilot work through supplementary research in the UK and Spain. Our aim was to gather empirical data that could better inform policy on the demand for migrant sex and domestic workers and in particular its relation to trafficking. We also sought to generate data that would allow us to engage with theories around migration, forced and free labour, embodied and emotional labour, gender, race, sexuality, nationality and citizenship. Objectives were:

1. To gather and analyse survey and interview material on demand for migrant sex and domestic workers;
2. To gather data on the relationship between markets for sex and domestic work, and other kinds of markets;
3. To gather data on how participants in these markets view the involvement of children in these markets
4. To explore similarities and differences between paid domestic work and commercial sex, and in particular to explore how demand for labour in these sectors is related to socially accepted ideas about race, gender, sexuality and age.
5. To contribute to theory development
6. To develop research methods
7. To facilitate evidence based policy.

We found that there is no absolute or given level of demand for the services of sex or domestic workers, and that where these services are cheaply available, people are more likely to feel that they “need” them. But an affordable supply is not a sufficient condition for demand. Demand is also linked to personal histories and circumstances, and social norms also play an important role in employment decisions and practices. So far as the specific demand for migrant workers was concerned, we found employers of domestic workers valued the economic, social and political inequalities that separated them from migrants because it allowed them to imagine that they were “helping out” rather than merely “employing” and this helped them manage an otherwise difficult and potentially conflict-ridden relationship with their domestic worker. Employers often actively sought migrants knowing that their vulnerable immigration status would give the employer greater control over aspects of the employment relation, in particular labour retention. The same was true of some employers in the sex sector. Sex workers’ clients, by contrast, identified availability rather than a specific preference for migrant women (or men) as the main explanation for their demand for services provided by migrant workers. Indeed, they tended to prefer sex workers they felt were in some ways “the same” as them, whereas employers preferred domestic workers that they felt were “different”.

Research findings drew attention to the limitations of conventional labour market analysis in the sense that employers and clients were interested the physical/personal attributes of a worker supplying the service, rather than merely in questions of cost or efficiency. Both

employers and clients wanted to feel comfortable about accepting services from the worker, and whether or not they felt comfortable was linked to the social identity, also sometimes the immigration status, of the worker.

Employers and clients had very different ideas about children's involvement in sex and domestic work. Employers tended to relate to their adult domestic workers as if they were children (calling them "girls", "naughty" etc). They felt that children could make good domestic workers and often stated that they would employ a child if they lived in countries where this was common practice. Clients on the other hand, while attaching sexual value to youth also tended to believe that only adults could consent to the prostitution contract, and such consent was important to them. Client interviewees were cognizant of recent debates about the commercial sexual exploitation of children in a way that domestic workers employer interviewees were not aware of debates about domestic as one of the worst forms of child labour.

The research also drew attention to the role of the state in constructing markets for commercial sex and domestic work. The state directly generates demand for domestic workers through its policies on provision of care in private households for example, but also, the fact that it does not treat either domestic work or commercial sex as employment like any other has great significance for the markets for sex and domestic workers. It means that the (implicit) contracts forged with workers in these sectors are treated as a private matter, and the state thus creates what is effectively a radically free 'free market'. However, 'sellers' and 'buyers' of services are not equal, and certain immigration statuses create marginalized groups who are vastly unequal to buyers.

We found no evidence of employer or client demand for "trafficked" labour as such. However, employers in domestic work and in the sex sector were often interested in cheap, flexible and compliant workers. From the viewpoint of the unscrupulous employer, the question is not whether migrants have been "trafficked" or "smuggled" or are otherwise illegally present in the country, but rather whether their immigration status and their desperation for work makes them, in the words of one employer we interviewed "so frightened that they're not going to pull any stunts".

As well as producing academic work we have engaged with policy-makers, the media, NGOs and trades unions to disseminate analysis and results of our research at both national and international levels. A report on the research published by the International Organisation for Migration in 2003 was widely publicised, and a summary of its contents appeared on US Embassy websites around the world. This report was also extensively cited in the 2006 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights aspects of the victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, as well as in responses to her Report. Both Anderson and O'Connell Davidson have had discussions with and presented to a wide range of users including OSCE, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Trades Union Congress, the International Labour Organisation and the Transport and General Workers' Union.