

# Sex

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I help old ladies across the street, I'm kind to animals, I visit my grandmother," she continued.

"As feminists," Chapkis said, "we often thought that sex had been so brutal for some women

sex was seen as **dangerous.**"

Hartley, like Chapkis thinks blame should not only be on pornography and prostitution, and that perhaps mainstream images and practices are likely also responsible for sexual violence to women.

"In 99% of commercially available pornography, a woman is depicted desiring sex, pursuing sex, having sex, having orgasms and at the end of the movie she's still alive, happy, healthy, and well," insisted Hartley, who sees this work as important for women. "Women really need to look at that message in light of what Hollywood has to offer and get off the kick that it's pornography that's violent."

Still, there exists a debate between anti-prostitution feminists and pro-prostitution feminists. Arian Amsberg, a writer and sexologist also interviewed by Chapkis, believes the implication of the practice on society should be more closely monitored.

"One of the things that I regret is that our feminist movement doesn't think enough about the long-term effects of prostitution

on society as a whole," said Amsberg. "They only seem to be concerned about the women who want to prostitute themselves and how they can best be

protected."

"But they don't think about what prostitution means," continued Amsberg, "how it changes society and affects the possibility of equality between men and women."

Chapkis somewhat disagrees.

"Even if we want to eliminate [prostitution], we should want to make sure they [sex workers] are safe," said Chapkis, who believes a harm reduction model would be better than trying to eliminate what is seen as the 'problem' of prostitution.

Of course to Chapkis, prostitution is not a 'problem' and she thinks that it should be decriminalized as in the Netherlands, rather than legalized as it is in few counties in the state of Nevada.

The Nevada model is one you do not want to have anywhere else in the world, Chapkis said. Sex workers are not allowed to work independently, and must turn over a significant portion of their earnings to their male bosses, and women have no input into

what sexual favours they will and will not perform, explained Chapkis. If they do not comply, they are fired, she added.

"[This kind of treatment] undermines women's

choice," said Chapkis, who added that these women are forced to live, sleep, and eat at their work place.

Individuals who refused to work under these stipulations and try to work independently, explained Chapkis, face threat of arrest.

She pointed out that when inspecting these closely monitored

establishments, health inspectors will examine the sex worker's health, but will never test clients, therefore leaving women at risk.

Chapkis's research in the Netherlands has exposed what is perhaps a better model for women performing erotic labour. By decriminalizing prostitution – doing away with laws dealing with

the practice – Chapkis believes women would gain control of the practice, improving work conditions.

By decriminalizing prostitution, regulations surrounding erotic labour would have to be negotiated with the sex workers rather than owners or the clients. Sex workers would finally take charge, says Chapkis.

"I would want to

believe that anyone would want to do this [prostitution]. If prostitutes were treated the same way as massage therapists, there would not be such a problem [getting paid to touch someone]," said Chapkis, explaining what may be unpleasant to one person, may not be for another (what she refers to as the "politics of ick").

Erotic labour should have the same credibility as anyone who does service work such as waitressing, Chapkis said.

*Dr. Wendy Chapkis was the keynote speaker of Body Thoughts organized by the UPEI Women's Centre on March 18<sup>th</sup>. She is also the author of Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance.*

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