

Work-life laws privilege brothel and community interests

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Work-life laws and policies are put in place primarily to protect workers. However, for legal prostitutes working in Nevada's brothels these laws and policies are instead geared towards brothel and community interests, finds a new study published in the journal *Human Relations*.

Generally speaking, work-life laws and policies do not apply uniformly across occupations, leaving some legal [workers](#) without access to a wide range of strategies for managing boundaries between work and nonwork time. The researchers explain how, "most work-life laws exist primarily for two reasons: (1) to protect and benefit workers or (2) to protect communities. work-life laws for legal prostitutes largely emerged from this latter tradition."

One of the main work policies that the researchers explored was the lockdown which prevents prostitutes in some locations from leaving brothels in the evening, unless they are on their day off, which they generally have to take out of town. The researchers discovered that lockdown helps brothels to stay "below the sagebrush", i.e. keep prostitutes hidden.

"Unlike most work-life regulations, which protect workers from exploitation and the community from accidents related to overwork, lockdown regulations primarily benefit the brothels [...] Brothels also benefit from keeping prostitutes out of the limelight because they are able to continue their business without visibly going against the moral expectations of the surrounding communities."

As so call 'dirty workers' Nevada's legal prostitutes also carry the weight of the stigma associated with their positions, which negatively affects them in the community. A key example of this was given by one of the prostitutes interviewed who explained her own experience of trying to secure a car loan:

"I tried to lease a super basic Audi... And they were like, 'We can't give it to you.' And I was like, 'I make 20 grand plus a month and you're telling me you can't give me a loan? A 20 grand loan... They want your proof of income. And it comes from here... And I was automatically denied.'"

These prostitutes, through the process of coping with both occupation-based stigma and work-life laws and regulations, have to deal with a complicated work-life arrangement, as the researchers concluded:

"Individual prostitutes take on the occupational stigma and unfair work-life laws and regulations while brothel and community interests are privileged."

More information: "Work-life management in legal prostitution: Stigma and lockdown in Nevada's brothels", *Human Relations*, 2016.

Provided by SAGE

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