

WAS

From physical sex therapy to entertainment: the motivations of women buying sex in Australia
Caldwell, H & de Wit, J

There is scant empirical evidence that women buy sex. A UNSW project explored women's experiences buying sex. The project also examined social perspectives on women buying sex and sex worker understandings of their female clients. The social analysis found women are positioned as not needing or desiring commercial sex. The sex worker's in the study felt that men and women are similarly motivated to buy sex, but there is little evidence regarding women's motivations to buy sex.

This paper draws on women's accounts of their experiences buying sex obtained through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted via Skype with 21 women who bought sex across Australia. The diverse participants responded to social media posts and advertisements on adult services websites. The study used interpretive phenomenological analysis to identify pertinent themes.

Ten of the women interviewed noted that their main motivation to buy sex was for physical sex therapy. Three of these had vaginismus, three had histories of intimate partner violence, and two had experienced childhood sexual abuse. Two further participants initially spoke of buying sex for entertainment, prompting recollections of buying sex for therapy in the past. Four of the women with therapeutic motivations did not frame their activities as buying sex. Two of these women did not feel sexy and wished to be dissociated from women who buy sex for entertainment. The major motivator for the remaining 11 participants was to experience sexual pleasure through non-committal and non-reciprocal sex. All 21 participants described feeling better about themselves after buying sex, regardless of motivation.

There was a clear divide between women who recounted motivations of buying sex for therapy or for entertainment. All women however reported similar outcomes of improved wellbeing. Citing therapeutic motivations for buying sex may be an attempt to manage stigma, reflecting dominant expectations of women's sexual socialization.