

Susanne Hoffmann



My research project is about sex workers' transcultural relationships on the Mexican/USA border. Women sex workers establish social networks with customers for various reasons such as protection, additional financial resource, and personal migration projects. The aim of my current research project is to explore how these relationships are structured in the transcultural context of the Mexican/USA border. At the centre of my research are the transcultural encounters of sex workers and customers, as I ask how they are structured in this particular context, how the gendered, sexualised and racialised body is being imagined and negotiated, and finally how traditional discourses are being contested and shifted by sex workers themselves. I will carry out an ethnographic field study in the Mexican border city Tijuana which has long been attracting sex workers from all over the country (and beyond). Many poor women and/or single mothers are drawn to the 'flourishing' city of Tijuana by fantasies of escape from the limited range of opportunities available to them, and also by the hope of getting the chance to pursue their own personal migration project to the USA or Europe.

Through participant observation I want to trace the daily social interaction between sex workers and their customers, and through reconstruction of the dialogues between sex workers and customers in the daily interaction I want to explore the configuration and significance of cultural imaginations which influence their interpersonal interaction.

The results of my research will hopefully contribute to a new understanding of how sex workers in border regions organise and transform their social lives. It will illustrate sex workers' agency in the context of the border sex industry.

Susanne.Hofmann@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk