

**The Student Sexwork Project conference, Swansea University
27th March 2015**

Innovations in dissemination: Telling stories - making an impact and reducing stigma

Professor Chris Morris

In 2012, *two* women walked into my life.

My role at the outset was to create a film output that shed light on the emerging research and to help put the project on the radar of student sex workers, policy makers, Universities and the general public.

My work as a filmmaker is built upon a dialogic approach to the form and themes of documentary film practice, embracing the notion of praxis – *the act of engaging, applying, realizing ideas through a 'making action'*. This praxis-based film research, emphasises the importance of “documentary for use” and engagement with social reality, lived experience and the human condition.

In other words – I set off down the path of making with little notion of where/what the final form would be.

Initially I was asked to make a short animation – I realised straight away that there was a greater potential for a longer/more expansive documentary film and anyway – I was not an animator!

A review of existing materials, and the constant barrage of media requests that came into the Student Sex Work office, confirmed that new ways of articulating the research has become critical.

The output requires a practice methodology that is designed to avoid the repetitive, easy and lazy imagery of sex, sex work that our culture endlessly peddles.

Four Stages:

- **A short animation.** Would not address the breadth of experience or maximize impact.
- **Straight Documentary** – on solid ground/safe territory – Voices would be gathered and used in their raw form - but the interviews that were beginning to be collected were promised anonymity.
- **Drama** – In the early stage of research gathering I thought that re-interpretation of the gathered voices would be a possible way forward. Spoke with the writer Owen Sheers.
- **Drama/Documentary** – As the weight of voices mounted it became abundantly clear that I had to find a way to allow the voices – unaltered – to speak. Dramatic interpretation (the mixing of stories) would in the end water down the potential impact). Actors recasting the documentary interviews in a hybrid form was the way I have chosen to take the project

forward. There is no consistent narrative drive in the film – simply a series of voices/testimonies that gradually unfold from light to dark. This story is from the final dark part of the film.

Summer 2013:

- **9 stories** - I chose the strongest/varied testimonies.
- **Verbatim but edited** – Script using the verbatim interview transcripts.
- **Test shoot** – Summer 2013. A trail output structure was tested in the summer of 2013 using a drama documentary model – the key was to test the balance of recreated documentary style interviews with dramatic scenes.
- **Key Issues** – nudity, representation of men, respect for the stories & anonymity for contributors, representation through the choice of actors etc
- **Tender** - Autumn 2013 – Tender/preproduction/casting/rehearsals.
- **Shoot** – Feb 2014 The full film was shot.
- **Editing** - April 2014 – Feb 2015. Here we have wrestled with the exact form – which up until last week was still fluid – intercutting voices vs partitioned voices for example. The dramatic scenes vs straight testimony.

Originally planned for intercutting – we decided in the edit to present each persons story in discreet sections – growing darker – providing narrative drive.

However – there have been a number of unplanned outputs - unplanned at the start, that very much take their place along side the main project:

- **Interview films to explain the project**
- **Behind-the-scenes – the fact that this is student focused throughout.**
- **Video diary**
- **Teasers**
- **Interview film – Beth.**
- **Others to follow (Lisa and Anna particularly)**
- **Possible creative outputs beyond broadcast.**

CLIPS

- Trailer/Teaser FOS
- Clip FOS
- Interview film – Beth.