EXPLORING DIRTY RESEARCH IN ACADEMIA: IS MY RESEARCH DIRTY?
Researching the legal boundaries of gay BDSM sex.

What is Dirty Work?
There are three types of dirty work:
1. Physical – jobs that include dangerous elements or jobs that are physically dirty;
2. Social – work linked to stigmatized populations;
3. Moral – work that is seen as morally compromised by society. (Hughes, 1951)

Therefore the stigma attached to dirty work is transferred to those who perform dirty work, and in turn they are treated as dirty workers (Grandy, 2008, p.179). Dirty work is not viewed by societies as unimportant or trivial, instead the stigma comes from the view of the work as distasteful if not disgusting, as necessary but polluting, as threatening to the moral order (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1994, p.418).

Can Academia be classed as dirty work?
While academia may not seem like dirty work, researching certain ‘unloved groups’ within ‘certain academic environments may be problematic for researchers, leaving them vulnerable to being socially tainted, and in some cases rendering them ‘dirty workers’ within their field (Sander-McDonagh, 2014, p.242). Irvine would argue that in particular sexualities research is classed as dirty research, stating that sociologists who study sexualities report challenges to their professional and personal identities in the form of snide comments, jokes, assumptions about their sexuality and challenges to the legitimacy of sexuality research overall (2014, p.639).

Marvin and Grandy (2013, p.239) have stated there is a struggle of professional identity for researchers who engage in ‘quirky research’, worrying about whether the subject will be taken seriously, what professional identity for researchers who engage in ‘quirky research’, sexuality research overall (2014, p.639) identified gay male practitioners. I plan to conduct semi-structured interviews.

How to navigate a dirty work reputation:
• Reframing – which involves transforming the meaning attached to the stigmatized work by infusing it with positive value or neutralizing the negative value
• Repurposing – which involves shifting the value of the job components so that more value is placed upon certain aspects of the job while minimizing the other, more tainted aspects.
• Refocusing – which involves redirecting attention to non-stigmatized features of the dirty so as to actively overlook the stigmatized attributes.
• Social weighting – which involves actively selecting referent others with which to compare the dirty worker’s job and elevate her status.

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References:
Hughes, FC (1942) Good People and Dirty Work. Social Problems, 10(3), pp. 3-11

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