

**ANNA HULUSJÖ**

**THE MULTIPLICITIES OF  
PROSTITUTION EXPERIENCE**

Narratives about power and resistance





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Malmö University, 2013  
Faculty of Health and Society



To all the women who have shared their stories with me, on the field and in research.



# ABSTRACT

This thesis is not primarily about ‘the rights and wrongs of prostitution’, at least not as they are conveyed in the prostitution debate, rather it aims to shift the focus from *what prostitution is* (work or violence, empowerment or exploitation), the topic of most prostitution debate, to *how prostitution operates*. That is, how power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices interconnect in making particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience possible.

The study is situated on the feminist narrative field and is constituted of interviews with twenty women with prostitution experience. With a genealogical approach to narrative analysis the participants’ narratives are not treated as reflections of an assumed prostitution ‘reality’, but rather there is an exploration of what the participants *do* as they narrate their experience, how they, through their narratives, construct their identities and make sense of their experiences and their lives.

By engaging with the participants’ narratives, the power and domination of the institution of prostitution and the multitude of tactics that the participants employed in order to negotiate, resist and destabilize power and domination were explored. The participants’ narratives were both entangled with and positioned against dominant narratives about prostitution and ‘the prostitute’. They contained complexities, contradictions and multiple meanings; prostitution was described as both enabling and constraining, as a means of resistance and as an effect of power. The participants spoke of how the institution of prostitution produced different experiences of being constituted as a ‘commodified body’, an ‘appropriate target for violence/undeserving victim’ and a stigmatized identity.

Depending on their social location and personal biography the participants were more or less able to manage the emotional and physical risks that prostitution involved. The narratives revealed how prostitution, as it currently operates, is conditioned by intersecting structures of social inequality.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I first embarked on this project I had little idea of the places writing this thesis would take me. It has been a journey in the true sense of the word. It has brought many new people into my life and it has taught me some invaluable lessons. Out of all the responses I have had on my text, the ones that have made me the happiest are when the reader saw something of her or himself in the narratives. Even though they did not share the specific subject positions of the participants, they found that the narratives resonated with their own experiences. This has strengthened my belief that even though the subject of this thesis is prostitution, the narratives essentially deal with what it is to live and make sense of life. This is ultimately what has made writing this thesis a deeply enriching process, also on a personal level.

There are many whose contributions to this thesis I would like to acknowledge. Most importantly, the twenty women who chose to participate in the study and who entrusted me with their stories. Meeting you was the highlight of this project. My deepest and most sincere thanks for sharing your life experiences with me.

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Charlotta Holmström and Sven-Axel Månsson invited me to be part of their research project, *The different conditions of prostitution*. They trusted me to find my own way from the start. The intellectual freedom that they have given me,

combined with their critical and insightful questions, have allowed me to grow as a researcher. Their combined wealth of experience from the prostitution research field has been of indispensable value. Lotta and Sven-Axel have complemented each other and their shared witty and warm dispositions have made supervision fun and inspiring.

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# PART I



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Narratives about prostitution

The auditorium goes quiet as a woman from the audience unexpectedly makes her way onto the stage. The theme of the debate is ‘the rights and wrongs of prostitution’ and the debate panel consists of politicians, journalists, scholars and a philosopher, but now she takes the stage. After grabbing the mic she tells the audience that she’s one of them, one of those the debaters have talked about for the past hour or so. She’s a prostitute. The auditorium goes even quieter. Some people in the audience stretch their necks to see better, others seem to squirm a little uncomfortably in their chairs. The woman turns to one of the debaters and says that she doesn’t agree with her understanding of prostitution as a form of violence against women. She refers to the men she sees as her saving angels. They are not perpetrators; in fact they are more decent than most men she has met in her life. If it wasn’t for prostitution she wouldn’t have been able to get by, as society has turned its back on her. She says prostitution isn’t the problem, society is. The debater responds unceremoniously that she doesn’t agree. Her response triggers some of the other debaters, her opponents, and causes yet another heated exchange of arguments. While the debate flares up again, the woman leaves the stage inconspicuously and disappears into the audience.

This thesis is not primarily about ‘the rights and wrongs of prostitution’, at least not as they are conveyed in the prostitution debate, rather it is about how women involved in prostitution, like the woman in the story above, narrate and make sense of their experiences, and how their narratives and experiences are enabled and constrained by dominant narratives about prostitution. Stating that I am not primarily concerned with ‘the rights and wrongs of prostitution’ does not imply

that I will not attempt to convey something about prostitution. Rather it implies that I will attempt to shift the focus from *what prostitution is* (work or violence, empowerment or exploitation), the topic of most prostitution debate, to *how prostitution operates*. That is, how power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices interconnect in making particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience possible.

Before elaborating on this I will begin with explaining how narratives about prostitution and the connection between power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices of prostitution first became a concern of mine.

### Experiences from the social work field

I happened to know the woman who intervened in the debate, her name is Veronika.<sup>1</sup> We had met when I worked as a social worker at the Prostitution Unit, a specialized support agency for people with prostitution experience. Veronika had told me snippets of stories from her life while we strolled down the street or while she rested her legs on a slow night. Mostly, her stories were about her medical condition, about not getting the right treatment and about struggling to make ends meet. Working as a social worker at the Prostitution Unit entailed doing outreach work, providing counselling services as well as practical support, and working with knowledge production and dissemination. As a social worker a large part of my job involved listening to women's stories, stories told in different contexts: in the street during outreach work, in the court room, in counselling sessions, in the waiting room to the STD-clinic, in an email sent to you et cetera. Listening to a multitude of stories about prostitution gave me insight into the complexity of prostitution experience and the narration of these experiences. The stories I listened to were told in public and in private, in groups and in individual meetings. Stories shifted in relation to time, space and the relationship to the person they were told to. Stories spoke of both power and resistance, victimisation and perseverance. While I struggled to make sense of the complexities and contradictions of personal narratives about prostitution experience, dominant narratives about prostitution appeared more and more problematic to me. The prostitution debate with its antagonism, certainties and exclamation marks seemed to produce much heat but little light. Narratives about prostitution in media, literature and film and their often archetypal images of 'the prostitute' reduced women with prostitution experience to sexualized Others, constituted as 'dirty, sexually indiscriminatory and willing to do anything for money' or 'desperate and

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<sup>1</sup> All the names in the thesis are changed with the purpose of protecting the participants' anonymity

victimized'. These narratives clearly had effects, effects that spoke of how power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices interconnect.

Dominant narratives about prostitution affect people's attitudes toward and ideas about prostitution and people involved in prostitution. The women who I met as a social worker had entered into prostitution for different reasons and under different circumstances, they were from different backgrounds and had different needs and aspirations. They occupied multiple subject positions: they were intimate partners, employees, students, artists, activists, mothers, feminists, migrants, and so much more. However, they shared the experience of being categorized as 'prostitutes'. Stigmatory dominant narratives about 'prostitutes' often had severe impact on these women's sense of self and also at times materialized into traumatic events and violations of their rights and of their bodies. The relationship between power, knowledge, discourse and practice was also evident in how personal narratives about prostitution were appropriated in the prostitution debate. Personal narratives were used to either legitimate or challenge the current prostitution policy and legislation.

As a social worker my colleagues and I were approached as 'experts' on the field. In one sense this entailed a position of power and authority. However, despite attempts to speak about the complexities and contradictions of prostitution experience, our accounts were often subjugated in the antagonist prostitution debate or appropriated and distorted by the binary oppositions and fixed positionalities of the prostitution field. I found it exceedingly difficult to speak publically about prostitution in any meaningful way. Dominant narratives seemed to create boundaries for what could be said, thought and understood about prostitution. When asked to join a research project on the different conditions of prostitution, I thought of it as an opportunity to challenge these boundaries, to allow for the multiplicities of prostitution experience. This thesis thus grows from my desire to produce a discursive space in which the complexities and contradictions of prostitution can be explored.

### Narratives and power

As I stated in the beginning, my starting point in this thesis is to shift the focus from *what prostitution is* (work or violence, empowerment or exploitation), the topic of most prostitution debate, to *how prostitution operates*. That is, how power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices interconnect in making particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of

prostitution experience possible. In exploring how prostitution operates, I have turned to women's personal narratives about prostitution. My experiences from the social work field had taught me that, as opposed to the universalizing theories employed in the prostitution debate, women's personal narratives contain the complexities and contradictions of prostitution experience necessary to create an understanding of how prostitution operates. I was therefore set on doing a narrative study.

Narrative research is diverse and the approach to narrative analysis varies depending on the field and the theoretical and epistemological framework of the research. This thesis is situated in an intersection between feminist narrative research and Foucauldian analytics of power and thus falls within the poststructuralist tradition of narrative research. Why did I turn to Foucault? As I stated before, my main concerns when embarking on this project were the effects of narratives, the social and material effects of dominant narratives in the lives of women involved in prostitution and how dominant narratives seemed to create boundaries for what could be said, thought and understood about prostitution. Foucault's theorization of power made connections both with my concern with the materiality of narratives and the power relations within which narratives emerge. In what follows I will explain how.

Foucault's work emerged in the crisis of modernity together with other theories that explore the relation between language, power, knowledge and subjectivity. Diverging from dominant theories of power as repressive, as imposing force on subjects, Foucault theorized power as a productive force, producing truth, knowledge and ultimately the subject itself (Foucault, 1990). With an understanding of power as productive, power is not seen as 'a thing' that one can possess or not possess, but rather as operating through relations and effects. Foucault's theorization of power is therefore not concerned with 'the who or whom of power' but rather 'the how of power', i.e. how power operates in the micro-practices of everyday life (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, p.8).

In exploring how power operates, Foucault took a particular interest in the relations and effects of discourse. He emphasized the productive capacity of discourse by asking that we "*not treat[ing] discourse as a group of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.*" (Foucault, 1977a, p. 49) With a Foucauldian approach to discourse, discourse is considered intrinsically interlinked with the non-discursive. Engaging with discourse from

a Foucauldian perspective thus entails engaging with material realities (events, relations, social and economic formations and bodily experiences) not with mere ideas (Jäger, 2001, p. 37). Moreover, according to Foucault's theorisation of power, power, knowledge and discourse are intrinsically connected (Foucault, 1990, p. 100). Power determines which narratives emerge as dominant and which narratives are subjugated. Foucault's theorization of power thus allows for an exploration of the interconnection of power relations, systems of knowledge, discourses and practices.

Prostitution is shaped by materialities and institutions, the cultural, economic and social context in which it takes place, and by the prevailing understandings of prostitution. This combination of factors make possible, sustain and reproduce particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience. Following Foucault, in shifting the focus from what prostitution is to how power operates in the micro-practices of prostitution, I take a particular interest in the discursive practices of prostitution. With a Foucauldian approach to narratives, narratives are seen as productive. Narratives do things, they constitute realities and shape the social (Tamboukou, 2008a). The question of *what narratives do* is central to this thesis. In stating that I am concerned with what narratives do, I suggest that narratives, dominant as well as personal, have both functions and effects. There is moreover a connection between dominant narratives and personal narratives. Dominant narratives about prostitution engage with numerous different discourses, discourses on (hetero)sexuality, femininity, masculinity, work, violence, freedom and power for example. When women narrate and make sense of their experiences their narratives and experiences are both enabled and constrained by dominant narratives about prostitution.

As stated before, this thesis is an attempt to engage with the multiplicities of prostitution experience. Considering this, it might seem contradictory that I only study women's narratives, despite the fact that there are men as well as transgender individuals who are involved in prostitution. Research indicate that male and transgendered prostitution exhibits both similarities and differences in comparison to female prostitution (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p. 12; Koken, Bimbi, & Parsons, 2010). However, male prostitution constitutes a different set of discourses to that of female prostitution (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p. 248). Since I am interested in how discourses on prostitution and 'the prostitute' enable and constrain personal narratives and experiences, including men and transgender individuals in the selection would have entailed considering a different set of discourses.

## Taking up a critical perspective on knowledge

When I left the Prostitution Unit to embark on this research project, Veronika and I lost touch. When I returned to the field to recruit research participants, we met again. Veronika is one of the twenty women who chose to participate in this study, who chose to narrate about her experience.

Veronika made sense of her grabbing the mic in that debate and choosing to participate in this study, as a way for her to challenge what she perceived as dominant narratives about prostitution and ‘prostitutes’. Veronika’s narrative *both* had a function, as it constituted a form of resistance against being categorized, stigmatized and silenced as well as a means to make sense of her involvement in prostitution, *and* an effect, as it intervened with and stirred up the debate. Research that involves personal narratives about prostitution experience potentially has empowering effects in challenging othering representations. However, the fact that research is founded on personal narratives does not in itself prevent the (re)production of othering narratives and practices. Producing knowledge on a stigmatized phenomenon such as prostitution is complicated since it involves the risk of reinscribing women with prostitution experience as Other. In contemporary society research inevitably has an impact on life. The research that we produce, not least within the field of social work, can either reproduce or deconstruct normative ideas about individuals, groups, issues and practices. Social work research informs social policy and therefore, in the long run, affects ‘the management of lives’. Academic discourse can both reinforce and undermine power. Engaging with Foucault entails a critical perspective on knowledge. It necessitates a discussion on how research and researchers participate in producing the subjects of our studies, and the ‘truths’ through which these subjects are understood and accounted for. In the rest of the chapter I will explore the connection between personal narratives, feminist research and ‘the production of truth about prostitution’. I will argue in favour of the importance of a critical perspective on the production of knowledge and elaborate on why I believe a shift from what prostitution is to how prostitution operates is necessary. By the end of the chapter I will introduce the aim and research questions and the organization of the thesis.

### **1.2 Personal narratives, feminist research and the production of truth about prostitution**

Most of Foucault’s work directly speaks of his concern with ‘stories of authority’, or the relationship between power and knowledge. On the question

of the relationship between power and knowledge Foucault once said “*It is the problem which determines nearly all my books: how in occidental societies is the production of discourses, which (at least for a certain time) are equipped with a truth value, linked to different power mechanisms and institutions?*” (as cited in Jäger, 2001, p. 36). According to Foucault’s theorisation of power, power, knowledge and discourse are intimately connected (Foucault, 1990, p. 100). Particular knowledges gain the status of ‘truths’ by virtue of their relationship to power. Foucault argues that there can be no exercise of power without a corresponding production of ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1980c).

With the partial shift in power from the clergy to the scientists, ‘the truth’ of prostitution has since the mid nineteenth century largely been produced through scientific inquiry. The institution of academia has had the ‘rights to define’ what prostitution is and consequently who ‘the prostitute’ is. The problem of prostitution was initially constructed as a problem of public health and public nuisance, and as an issue of morality. ‘The prostitute’ was, in medical-scientific research, produced as the Other of ‘respectable feminine sexuality’, as unruly, immoral and diseased, her body was consequently subjected to control, regulation and surveillance.

Otherness is not static nor a personal characteristic, rather it is embedded in power relations that involve difference in access to material and symbolic resources, processes of exclusion and inclusion, and oppression and domination. An important form of control exercised over people who are constituted as Others is the control over their process of representation (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1997). ‘The prostitute’ was during the first half of the twentieth century reconstituted from immoral to psychopathological to anti-social. Women involved in prostitution had no control over their process of representation, they were spoken of and written about but had themselves very little access to the discourses with which their lives were entangled. While personal narratives about prostitution experience existed in diaries, letters and occasional autobiographies they were often lost or silenced and rarely became public. The public telling of personal narratives about prostitution experience is a quite recent phenomenon, less than half a century ago very few women could speak of their prostitution experience and have it matter to the production of truth about prostitution (Sanders, 2005a). Today, at least for some women, under some circumstances, talk has been made more possible.

In his classic book, *Telling sexual stories- power, change and social worlds*, Kenneth Plummer (1995) speaks of changes in the telling of, what he terms, sexual stories during the last quarter of the twentieth century. The changes Plummer engages with centres around the transformation of, what used to be, private experiences into public stories, personal suffering turned into collective participation, and pathological language turned into a political one (Plummer, 1995, p. 110). Plummer's focus is on stories of sexual suffering, surviving and surpassing which, in his text, are exemplified by 'coming out stories', 'rape stories' and 'recovery tales'. These are all personal narratives expressing pain, agony and frustration perceived as being linked to the sexual (Plummer, 1995, p. 50). Sexual stories are here defined as – "*the narratives of intimate life, focused especially around the erotic, the gendered and the relational*" (Plummer, 1995, p. 61). I am reluctant to name personal narratives about prostitution experience sexual stories, just as I am reluctant to the categorization of 'rape stories' or 'stories of Aids' as sexual stories. 'Stories of Aids' may just as well be defined as illness stories and 'rape stories' as violence stories, all depending on one's analytical focus. How to understand and analyze personal narratives about prostitution experience will be a central theme throughout this thesis. To return to Plummer, his text does provide us with a useful framework for understanding the transformation of personal narratives about prostitution experience from private to public stories.

Plummer states that stories come into time when a community has been "*fattened up, rendered ripe and willing to hear them*" (Plummer, 1995, p. 120). While stories may be told and listened to amongst separate individuals, they will not realize their full potential if they stay in this privatized form. The transformation of private stories to stories that can be told publically is a process of political proportions, a process that requires a collective creation of spaces in the wider social order and the wider story telling spaces (Plummer, 1995, p. 122). As the thesis unfolds, I will further explore the historical changes that have made the public telling of personal narratives about prostitution experience possible. However, one of the factors that have contributed to creating spaces for personal narratives to be told is feminist research. Much has been written on the matters of sexuality and sexual politics over the last four decades. Feminist scholars in particular have politicized the debate, demonstrating how something which has commonly been regarded as a private and personal matter is in fact a public and political issue. Sexuality has been seen as an important area for studies since it does not just imply personal experiences but also is a socially constructed

phenomenon with political implications. Personal narratives have been made central in theorizing prostitution with the view that understandings of power have to be grounded in the embodied existence of material beings.

Research that drew on personal narratives of women involved in prostitution first appeared in the early 1970s. Kate Millet's *The Prostitution Papers* (1973) involved two lengthy, unedited interviews with women with prostitution experience. Millett argued that the understanding of prostitution had to be grounded in the embodied existence of women involved in prostitution, she stated that: "*if anything, ultimately, is to be done or said or decided about prostitution, prostitutes are the only legitimate persons to do so*" (as cited in Jeffreys, 1997, p. 67). Millett and other radical feminist scholars came to theorize prostitution as the absolute embodiment of patriarchal male privilege (Barry, 1979, 1995; Dworkin, 1987, 1989; MacKinnon, 1989; Millet, 1973; Pateman, 1983, 1988). Drawing on personal narratives, radical feminists emphasized the harms women experienced in prostitution and explored the power relations in prostitution within the context of a gendered analysis of sexuality. Prostitution is in radical feminist theory understood as not only a consequence of, but also a cause to gender inequality. Prostitution is seen as playing a key role in maintaining the social inequality of women by reinforcing the idea of women as sexual objects. As stated before, radical feminist research on prostitution emphasizes the harm women are subjected to in prostitution. Prostitution is theorized as inherently exploitative and abusive. Women involved in prostitution are constructed as both physically and emotionally harmed and socially degraded. As prostitution is understood as an effect of the social, sexual and economic inequality faced by women in patriarchy, it is seen as something that could and should be abolished, that would cease to exist in a post-patriarchal society (Jeffreys, 1997).

Millett's idea that the understanding of prostitution has to be grounded in the embodied existence of women involved in prostitution became a much more complicated position to hold in the 1980s, when personal narratives that challenged a radical feminist understanding of prostitution were heard in public (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 67). With the emergence of the prostitutes' rights movement in the 1980s, a heated debate on the meaning of prostitution broke out among feminists. Three anthologies with writings of both women in the sex industry and activists and scholars writing from a sex workers' rights perspective challenged a radical feminist understanding of prostitution as inherently exploitative and abusive (Bell, 1987; Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; Pheterson, 1989). The term

'sex worker' was introduced as an alternative to the term 'prostitute' which was rejected because of its connotations of shame and disreputability. 'Sex work' was constituted as not necessarily any better or worse than other forms of service work. While radical feminist scholars argued that to sell sexual services inevitably violates the integrity of body and self, sex workers' rights activists and scholars argued that there are similarities between prostitution and other personal service occupations (Jenness, 1990). Within sex work discourse, 'the prostitute' was reconstructed as both a worker and a radical political identity. By framing prostitution as work, ideas on prostitution as immoral and the 'the prostitute' as a disreputable subject were challenged. Within the prostitutes' movement a new ethic emerged, an ethic that constituted involvement in prostitution as sensible and moral.

The feminist debate on prostitution was part of the larger antagonist feminist sexuality debate, sometimes referred to as the feminist sex wars. This debate illustrates a deep split within feminist theories on sexuality, a split between an emphasis on gendered oppression, sexual victimization and degradation and an emphasis on female agency, sexual freedom and pleasure (Overall, 1992, p. 707). By the end of the eighties, participants in the antagonist sexuality debates had formed two opposite camps around policy issues such as prostitution and pornography and the underlying questions of power, resistance and the possibility of female sexual agency in patriarchy (Bernstein, 1999). Diametrically different stands were taken on issues such as: the harm in prostitution and the possibility of consent, the issue of prohibition, and the liberating versus the oppressive function of prostitution (Spector, 2006, p. 421).

Personal narratives about prostitution experience were appropriated by both camps of the feminist sexuality debate. Even though the silence to a certain degree was broken, as personal narratives had become central to the production of truth about prostitution, narrating prostitution experience was proven to be far more complicated than for example narrating 'rape stories'. Plummer writes that the narration of 'rape stories' led to the empowerment of lives, as women were able to tell their stories and with greater emotional strength see themselves as active survivors (Plummer, 1995). This can to an extent be rendered true even when it comes to the narration of prostitution experience, but there are several complicating factors making such a comparison a problematic one. As became clear in the sexuality debates far from all personal narratives about prostitution experience are narrated from a survivor's perspective. There is a great variance of

personal narratives about prostitution experience, the narratives vary depending on the subject position from which they are told. The narrators' positions range from the position of 'the victim' or 'the survivor', to 'the political activist', 'the worker', 'the sex radical', et cetera. There are narratives about violence, coercion and exploitation, as well as narratives about power, control and emancipation. While both radical feminist research and sex work activism and research set out to challenge oppressive stories of authority, new stories of authority were created on both sides of the sexuality debates. As prostitution was theorized as either work or violence, a hierarchy of truth and knowledge was created, allowing for some personal narratives to be told while silencing others.

Elizabeth Bernstein argues, in a 1999 article, that even though the figure of 'the prostitute' had served as a key trope in the writings and arguments of both camps of the sexuality debate, there had been surprisingly little empirical research done to explore the lived experiences and conditions of contemporary prostitution. She claimed that prostitution had been abundantly theorized, yet insufficiently studied, amongst feminists. She echoed Kate Millett in arguing that: "*analyses of the social causes and meanings of prostitution should not take place in the abstract*" but should be based on empirical studies (Bernstein, 1999, p. 91). Since the 1990s there has been an expansion of prostitution research prompted by changes in the sex industry at large and shifts in political agendas regarding prostitution. Consequently numerous empirical studies have been carried out on the field. The expansion of prostitution research has entailed an exploration of the diversity and the stratification of the prostitution market(s). Indoor prostitution and changes in the forms, meanings and spatial organization of the sex industry have been explored (Bernstein, 2007; Sanders, 2005a; Weitzer, 2000). The focus has been broadened to include men and transgender individuals involved in prostitution (Kaye, 2003; Kulick, 1998). There has also been an increased focus on client behaviour (Monto, 1999, 2000, 2010; Sanders, 2008a). As a response to the growing attention given to the transnational issues of human trafficking and sex tourism the connections between prostitution, migration and globalization have become a hot topic for prostitution research (Andrijasevic, 2004; Brennan, 2004; O'Connell Davidson).

In the second edition of the anthology *Sex for sale* Ronald Weitzer concludes that, despite the recent proliferation of empirical prostitution research, the prostitution field is still largely structured by two major antagonist paradigms, *the oppression paradigm* and *the empowerment paradigm* (Weitzer, 2010, p. 5).

The oppression paradigm holds that prostitution is the most extreme expression of patriarchal gender relations and male domination. Research produced within this paradigm focus on coercion, violence and victimization. Exploitation, violence and degradation are seen as inherent in prostitution. The empowerment paradigm on the other hand defines prostitution as a form of work that potentially could be validating or empowering for people who are involved in it. Instead of focusing on structural power relations the focus is on the agency of the individual worker. Exploitation, violence and degradation are not treated as inherent in prostitution but rather as effects of stigmatization and criminalization. Writing on prostitution is thus to a large extent, characterized by either/or analyses, focusing either on the structural forces traversing the field or on the agency of individuals involved in prostitution (O'Neill, 2001; Phoenix, 1999). Weitzer argues that prostitution experiences should be seen as a phenomenon that varies across time, place and sector. In response to the oppression and empowerment paradigms he suggests a third perspective, which he terms *the polymorphous paradigm* (Weitzer, 2010, p. 6). Weitzer argues that, unlike the oppression and the empowerment paradigm, a polymorphous perspective should be “*sensitive to complexities and to the structural conditions shaping the uneven distribution of agency, subordination and worker’s control*” (Weitzer, 2010, p. 6). In order to understand the diversity and the stratification of the prostitution market(s) and the complexities of prostitution experience, Weitzer and others writing within the polymorphous paradigm stress the importance of contextualizing prostitution experience and addressing the ideological biases of the field. This call is more and more frequently made by prostitution scholars and is over recent years also commonly made in the prostitution debate in Sweden.

### The Swedish context and challenges on the field

In Sweden most prostitution research has been produced within the oppression paradigm. Feminist empirical research on prostitution emerged in Sweden in the 1970s. In a government official report on prostitution, prostitution was theorized as a structural problem and a form of patriarchal oppression of women (SOU 1981:71). Adhering to the second wave feminism imperative that the production of knowledge should be grounded in the embodied existence of women, the report drew on personal narratives of women involved in prostitution. The report generated social policy effects and led to the establishment of specialized support agencies, prostitution units. Social workers became the new ‘experts’ on prostitution and were given a central role in the production of truth about prostitution. As prostitution was constructed as a structural problem and an

issue of patriarchal sexuality, the client emerged as topic for prostitution research. Throughout the eighties and nineties, research was produced on the different parties of the sex trade. Scholars engaged with women's experiences of prostitution, the relationship between procurers and women involved in prostitution, men purchasing sex and the exiting processes of women involved in prostitution (Borg et al., 1981; Larsson, 1983; Månsson & Larsson, 1976; Månsson, 1981; Månsson & Linder, 1984; Månsson & Hedin, 1998; SOU 1981:71). Most of these studies had ties to the social work field, and drew on data from street prostitution. During the 1980s and 1990s the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression was institutionalized. In parliament there was a consensus regarding the institution of prostitution not belonging in a gender equal society. The increased focus on the demand side in prostitution led to calls for a criminalization of the purchase of sexual services. In 1999, Sweden prohibited the purchase of sexual services. Prostitution was reframed from a social policy issue to a criminal justice issue and placed in the context of men's violence against women.

Over the last decades the Swedish prostitution market has gone through great changes. The market of today is highly differentiated. Prostitution has partly been relocated from the street to online spaces. Most prostitution takes place indoors, as cell phones and the internet have decreased the need for public exposure for both buyers and sellers. While Nordic countries have also seen a recent proliferation of empirical prostitution research, it appears as if Sweden, which was in the forefront of empirically based research in the late seventies/early eighties, has lagged behind. In the recent research project 'Prostitution in the Nordic Countries', the authors concluded that knowledge on prostitution in Sweden had to be updated (Holmström & Skilbrei, 2008). Lately, critical voices have been raised claiming that Swedish prostitution research is ideologically biased, driven by a radical feminist ideological and political agenda, not taking the diversity and stratification of the prostitution market(s) into account (Dodillet, 2009; Östergren, 2006). This critique echoes the call to contextualize prostitution experience and to address the ideological biases of the field. In what follows I will respond to and expand on this critique in relation to my thesis. In doing this I will also elaborate on my thoughts on the importance of shifting the focus from *the what* to *the how* of prostitution.

Prostitution is a diverse phenomenon, and the prostitution market is differentiated, yet prostitution as a field of study largely treats prostitution as if it was 'one

thing' (Bernstein, 1999; Kesler, 2000; Satz, 1995). Consequently there is a lack of differentiation between different forms of prostitution. Most prostitution research is based on data from women involved in street prostitution. This is considered problematic not only since the street prostitution sector is relatively small in comparison to the indoor prostitution sector but also since there are studies that indicate that women with experience of street prostitution are more vulnerable to victimization than women with experience of indoor prostitution (Lowman & Fraser, 1995; Church, Henderson, Barnard & Hart, 2001). These studies show that women who sell sex outdoors report experiences of violence, threats and lack of control to a higher extent than women who sell sex indoors. To create a more comprehensive understanding of prostitution, research of street prostitution has to be complemented with research of indoor prostitution, as well as the experiences of men and transgender individuals involved in prostitution.

I agree that there is a need to study the diversity and the stratification of the prostitution market(s), however, I am critical of how these debates, at times, also appear to reduce the multiplicities of prostitution experience to differences between different prostitution sectors. Weitzer, for example, states that even though there is variation both within a particular sector and among individuals working from the same locale, it is the type of prostitution a person is involved in that is the best predictor of one's experiences (Weitzer, 2005a). I am cautious about such statements. It is true that women involved in street prostitution occupy the lowest stratum of the prostitution hierarchy and there are studies that indicate that they are the most victimized (Church et al. 2001; Ross, Crisp, Månsson & Hawkes, 2011). There are however other factors to take into account that we risk overlooking when we assume that the population first and foremost is divided along lines of prostitution sectors. The prostitution market is stratified by sectors as well as by variables such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality and age. Experiences of prostitution are also affected by the social and cultural context in which they are lived, as well as by the individual's personal biography. I am concerned that if we treat the prostitution sector as the primary predictor of prostitution experience, we, rather than challenging universalizing theories, risk producing *different* 'whats' of prostitution. 'The what' of street prostitution might then be constructed as exploitation and violence and 'the what' of indoor prostitution might be constructed as empowerment and work. If the aim is to explore the diversity of the prostitution market(s) and to allow for the multiplicities of prostitution experience I do not consider this feasible. Instead I argue that situating the meaning of prostitution empirically should entail

tracing continuities and discontinuities across sectors as well as within sectors. I do not claim that the prostitution sector is unimportant to the experience of prostitution but rather that other factors have to be taken into account as well. To contextualize prostitution experience entails that situated lived experience has to be explored in relation to the wider historical, cultural and social context. In order to shift the focus from the what of prostitution to the how, I argue that we have to contextualize prostitution experience by exploring how prostitution operates in different sectors as well as how it ties into the wider historical, cultural and social context.

As discussed above, prostitution is a difficult and contested area overloaded and invested by a series of antagonistic discourses, practices and ideologies. Depending on theoretical and analytical focus, prostitution is theorized as a number of things ranging from work to violence, from empowerment to exploitation. The prostitution field constitutes a battleground for a vast number of political agents with agendas as different as freeing the individual, emancipating women, combating heteronormative sexual norms, promoting labour rights, et cetera. As Joanna Brewis and Stephen Linstead (2000) argue the field seems to offer very little politically neutral ground on which to stand, or at least few researchers seem to want to take up such a position. The ideological bias of the field is indeed a central challenge for prostitution research. As Julia O'Connell Davidson argues:

It is not hard to find 'sex workers' who are prepared to 'voice' the view that they freely elected prostitution as a form of work, even to argue that prostitution allows them a greater degree of control over their own sexuality than that enjoyed by non-prostitute women and equally there is no shortage of former prostitutes who are prepared to 'voice' the view that their experience of prostitution was akin to that of rape or sexual abuse. Since prostitutes do not speak with one voice on the subject, it is very easy for theorists to 'cherry pick' in order to support their own preconceptions about prostitution (O'Connell Davidson, 1999, p. 114).

Considering the antagonistic nature of the debate, the field has been characterized as consisting of abolitionist scholars and those against abolitionist scholars, anti-abolitionist scholars (Kuo, 2002). Anti-abolitionist scholars, such as Weitzer, tend to blame radical feminism for the ideological biases of the field. Weitzer (2005b) argues that radical feminist scholars' research is deliberately skewed to serve their political agendas. He argues that this is symptomatic for prostitution

research underpinned by a radical feminist theoretical perspective. Gayle Rubin make similar claims in her classic 1984 text, stating that radical feminist writers deliberately select the “*worst available examples*” and the most disturbing instances of abuse and present them as representative (Rubin, 1984, p. 301). Some anti-abolitionist scholars argue that in order to challenge assumptions of prostitution as inherently violent or exploitative, prostitution should be analyzed within the realm of work. Frances Shaver for example suggests that the key to overcoming the association between sex work and victimization, the prevalence of dichotomies and the notion that sex workers represent a homogenous population, is research designs of strategic comparisons where sexual service work is compared to other personal service work (Shaver, 2005, p. 297). Even though I agree with Shaver in that comparisons between people involved in prostitution and people involved in personal service work potentially could generate interesting results regarding which experiences are unique to prostitution and which could be attributed to more general conditions, such as gender, ethnicity, educational opportunities, health status, and poverty, I find her starting point - to “*normalize sex work and place it in the context of other personal service work*” problematic (Shaver, 2005, p. 314). If the aim is to challenge the dichotomy of prostitution as either work or violence, defining prostitution as work must be considered problematic. Such an approach risks masking the heterogeneity of prostitution experience rather than making it visible. By placing the phenomenon in the realm of work, certain narratives, or layers of meaning within narratives, will become dominant while others will be marginalized or silenced, similarly to when prostitution is theorized as a form of violence. A sex as work approach to prostitution will create boundaries for what can be said, thought and understood about prostitution. When using the term sex work without contextualizing it questions like: How did/does prostitution become sex work? and Which forces were/are at work in that historical process? remain unexplored, leaving the term naturalized. When prostitution is termed sex work it is codified to establish a certain meaning. Terming prostitution sex work establishes certain boundaries for the production of its meaning.

Discourses form the context for the construction and negotiation of meaning for personal narratives about prostitution experience. I agree with Brewis & Linstead (2000) that prostitution researchers’ positions in many cases seem to be pre-theorized and consequently worked out on the empirical data gathered. Narratives produced within a field of antagonistic discourses, practices and ideologies leave little room for the complexities and contradictions of prostitution

experience and the diversity of the prostitution market(s). Shifting the focus from the what to the how of prostitution entails not pre-theorizing prostitution as either work or violence but rather to, through women's personal narratives, study the multiplicities of prostitution experience and how women themselves make sense of their experiences. In this endeavour I have chosen to use the term prostitution since even though it is a term charged with a lot of meaning, meanings are multiple, while the term sex work inevitably places prostitution in the realm of work.

After having responded to and expanded on the call to contextualize prostitution and the need to address the ideological biases of the field I will now return to my concern with what narratives do.

### The functions and effects of personal narratives

As I stated before, in shifting the focus from what prostitution is to how it operates I am particularly concerned with *what narratives do*. Both what dominant narratives do and what women do as they narrate their experiences. So far I have mostly engaged with the production of truth about prostitution in discussing how stories of authority create hierarchies of truth and knowledge that allow some stories to be told while silencing other. I have argued that in order to permit an openness rather than closure of analysis, we have to shift the focus from what prostitution is to how prostitution operates.

Apart from what dominant narratives do, I take an interest in the functions and effects of personal narratives, i.e. what women do as they narrate their experience. Ever since Millet's *The Prostitution Papers*, personal narratives have played a central role in feminist prostitution research. Personal narratives about prostitution experience have largely been approached as a direct reflection of lived experience and appropriated in the construction of new stories of authority.

This thesis is situated on the experience centred narrative field (Squire, 2008). While some experience centred narrative research tend to treat narratives as direct reflection of experience, narrative research inspired by the postmodern and poststructuralist narrative turn in social sciences question the notion of narratives as simply representing or recapitulating experience (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008). Instead narratives are seen as embedded in a broader socio-cultural context. Rather than being treated as a reflection of experience, narratives are theorized as a means of making sense of experience and constructing

our identities (Squire, 2008). It is through narratives that we become subjects. Instead of seeing personal narratives as direct reflections of lived experience, I ask questions regarding how and why experience is storied (Riessman & Quinney, 2005, p. 394).

Experience centred narrative research has been described as fitting what has been defined as a second wave of narrative analysis, a wave moving away from the study of narrative as text, to the study of narrative in context (Phoenix, 2008, p. 64). To study narratives in context does in this thesis entail that I take an interest in the social and cultural character of personal narratives. As discussed before, prostitution is a phenomenon immersed in narratives. I argue that in order to understand personal narratives of prostitution experience we have to explore the relationship between dominant narratives and personal narratives. Jill Johnston speaks of identity as “*what you can say you are, according to what they say you can be*” (as cited in Madigan, 2011, p. 66). Identity is then not understood as a result of introspection or the unproblematic reflection of a private inner self but rather as contextual and relational. As you might remember, Veronika made sense both of her grabbing the mic in that debate, as well as choosing to participate in this study, as a way to challenge what she perceived as dominant narratives about prostitution and ‘prostitutes’. There is a clear connection between her personal narrative and dominant narratives about prostitution. In the thesis I will explore how the research participants both draw on and position themselves against dominant narratives and story lines about prostitution and how their narratives are enabled or constrained by larger social patterns of social and cultural storytelling. I argue that what has been said about prostitution before exerts a critical influence on what can and cannot be said, how things are expressed, what appears as self-evident and what has to be explained. In the analysis I will engage with questions regarding what makes a certain narrative possible and how personal narratives about prostitution experience are enabled or constrained by discourses on prostitution as well as how they are entangled with wider discourses on (hetero)sexuality, femininity, masculinity, work, violence, freedom and power.

Women’s narratives about prostitution experience contain complexities, contradictions and multiple meanings. Prostitution is described as both traumatic and exploitative and as a choice or as a means to a better life. I believe that the challenge is to not treat narratives as more or less true representations of an assumed prostitution ‘reality’ but to explore how women through narrating, construct their identities and make sense of their experiences and their lives.

### **1.3 Aim and research questions**

In this chapter I have introduced how narratives about prostitution and the connection between power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices of prostitution first became a concern of mine. I have spoken of how this thesis grows from my desire to produce a discursive space in which the complexities and contradictions of prostitution experience can be explored. I have argued that in order to create such a space we have to shift the focus from what prostitution is to how it operates, how power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices interconnect in making particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience possible. In such a space the continuities and discontinuities of prostitution experience can be explored, different narratives about prostitution can coexist and enter into dialogue with each other, rather than subjugating each other. In engaging with the participants' narratives I will attempt to create an analysis sensitive to *both* the structural *and* the agentic aspects of prostitution experience and to contextualize prostitution experience. Based on this, the aim of the thesis is:

To study the multiplicities of prostitution experience in relation to the contexts in which these experiences are lived and told.

The research questions that will guide the study are:

- How do the participants make sense of their involvement in prostitution?
- How are their narratives and experiences enabled/constrained by dominant discourses on prostitution?
- What do the participant's narratives tell us about how prostitution operates, how power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices interconnect in making particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience possible?

### **1.4 Organization of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into five parts. *Part I* is the introduction to the thesis. In Chapter One I have introduced the reader to how narratives about prostitution first became a concern of mine. I have spoken of the relationship between the production of truth about prostitution and personal narratives and have argued for the importance of shifting the focus from the what to the how of prostitution. I have positioned my study in relation to previous research and the challenges imbued in the field and presented the aim and research questions.

*Part II* entails chapters on theory, methodology and method. In Chapter Two, *Theoretical points of departure*, I introduce my approach to theory as a ‘tool box’ and outline the theoretical points of departure of the thesis. With my starting point in questions regarding power and subjectivity, which have emerged in the space that the encounter between Foucault and feminism produce, I discuss my perspective on power, domination, resistance, subjectivity and agency. In Chapter Three, *A genealogical approach to narrative analysis*, I introduce the methodological framework of the study and discuss the genealogical tactics employed in the analysis. Here I frame prostitution as, what Foucault terms, a *dispositif* - a grid of power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices. In Chapter Four, *Narrating, transcribing and translating stories about prostitution experience*, I describe the research process in terms of the participant selection process and the interviews as well as the transcription and translation of the narratives. I end the chapter with reflecting on ethical consideration in doing research on prostitution.

*Part III* is constituted of Chapter Five, *Critical moments in the history of the construction of prostitution discourse in Sweden*. In this chapter I attempt to distance myself from the discourses of the present by exploring how they were constructed in the past. I explore historical moments marked by the emergences of new forms of reasoning, regulation and constitution of prostitution and ‘the prostitute’. Through examining discourses and by mapping the strategies, relations and practices of power in which knowledges were embedded I trace the history of discourses on prostitution and their power effects in order to reveal something about the power/knowledge of the present in which the research participants of this study are trying to make sense of their prostitution experience. The purpose of this chapter is thus not so much to understand the past as to understand the present.

In *Part IV* we enter into the storyworld of the participants’ narratives. In Chapter Six, *Introductions*, I introduce the research participants and frame their narratives as political actions. Political actions that refocus from *what* one is: ‘prostitute’, ‘woman’, ‘victimized’ et cetera. to *who* one is in one’s unique existence. In Chapter Seven, *Beginning stories*, I explore the participants’ stories about entering into prostitution. I explore how the participants make sense of the entry into prostitution and discuss what these stories may tell us about the complex relations of power, domination and resistance of the *dispositif* of prostitution. Considering beginning stories as the first step in the intentional production of

meaning I also discuss the challenges and possibilities of narrating prostitution experience. In Chapter Eight, *The spatiality of prostitution experience*, I explore the participants' narratives about the significance and meaning of space to the prostitution experience. Rather than treating space as something fixed and dead I explore how space both is shaped in and shapes the prostitution experience. I explore how the participants position themselves in relation to ideas of 'the prostitute' as a public woman and the street as a dangerous place and I explore the relocation of prostitution from the street space to online space and reconfigurations of the public/private in prostitution. In Chapter Nine, *Tactics –everyday practices of resistance*, I engage with the participants' narratives about managing emotion, violence and stigma. I discuss the multitude of tactics that the participants employ in order to negotiate, resist and destabilize power and domination. In Chapter Ten, *Exiting prostitution*, I explore the participants' narratives about exiting prostitution. I discuss how exiting prostitution marked a larger rupture in the participants' life stories, a rupture that generated stories of change, flight and movement. I take a particular interest in the role of stories in the exiting process.

*Part V* entails the summary and conclusion. Chapter Eleven, *Conclusion*, is a discussion chapter which ties together the issues raised in the previous analytical chapters. Here I discuss what the participants' narratives have revealed regarding the dispositif of prostitution.



## PART II



## 2. THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

### 2.1 Foucault, feminism and theory as toolbox

Doing feminist narrative research with a Foucauldian approach is not without controversy. Some feminist scholars warn against a too close engagement with Foucault. Even though Foucault's work is largely acknowledged as contributing to outlining the intricate forms of power in discursive and non-discursive practices it has been criticized by feminist scholars on a number of points, one being Foucault's work on power and subjectivity.

In *The subject and power* Foucault begins by stating that the goal of his work has not been to analyze "*the phenomenon of power, but rather to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects*" (Foucault, 1982). While some feminists have found Foucault's deconstruction of subjectivity useful, others have suggested that there are dangers and flaws in his analysis. Foucault's work has been described both as a threat and a challenge as well as a contribution to feminist theory.

In the introduction to the anthology *Feminism and Foucault*, Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (1988) suggest that a friendship between feminism and Foucault, despite, or maybe because of, its inherent tensions, can offer dialogic openings by raising questions and giving each other insights that otherwise would have been missed. Foucault has been criticized for being unconcerned with, or even insensitive to, feminist concerns (Bailey, 1993; Soper, 1993). His lack of direct engagement with feminist issues leaves gaps within his work, gaps that have been addressed by feminist critics.

Foucault has referred to his writing as a toolbox (Patton, 1979). The tools his theory provides us with might be bent, altered and used in ways different

from how they were used by their creator. Jean Grimshaw (1993) states that in discussing the usefulness of Foucault's theory for feminist purposes, 'Foucault' and 'Feminism' should not be seen as two distinct blocks of theory that might or might not be brought into a relationship. She suggests that whether certain theoretical tools are useful or not depends on what one is looking for them to do. Feminist scholars have different theoretical ideas, there is no consensus of opinion what theory should perform. Whether one will find Foucault's writing useful or not is thus related to whether there are affinities between the questions that one addresses and those of Foucault, and what kind of dialectics that can be created between these (Grimshaw, 1993).

Considering the centrality of the structure/agency divide in prostitution research, the questions regarding power and subjectivity that arises in the space that the encounter between Foucault and feminism produce are highly relevant to my research. Following Foucault, I have approached theory as a toolbox. The use of theory in this thesis is pragmatic and strategic. In engaging with the narratives of the research participants I have sought theoretical tools to help me open up the narratives for a critical reading, to resolve problems and address issues.

In an interview, Gilles Deleuze confers with Foucault that "*A theory does not totalize; it is an instrument for multiplication and it also multiplies itself. (...) As soon as a theory is enmeshed in a particular point, we realize that it will never possess the slightest practical importance*" (Foucault, 1977a, p. 208). In the same interview, theory is conceptualized as practice, as something that has to be put to work, and as it is put to work inevitably will encounter obstacles that will require that it is altered or complemented. The dialogue in this interview speaks of a commitment to critical creativity and a disbelief in closed theoretical frameworks. Theory should act as a force that resists power relations and draws attention to the degree to which concepts and theories themselves have the capacity to structure and govern the realm of the intelligible. Foucault's refusal to confine his work within a closed theoretical framework has inspired scholars to argue for a strategic and pragmatic use of Foucault's theory (Goodwin Smith, 2010; Said, 1994; Tamboukou & Ball, 2001). This kind of approach informs the use of theory in this thesis. I have not approached Foucault as an expert of his work, rather I have appropriated some of the theoretical tools that Foucault's work offer and together with theoretical tools of feminist scholars working in a variety of fields, I have put them to work in my analysis.

Foucault's writing has provided me with many useful tools, it is fair to say that Foucault's analytics of power, and the various ways in which these have been taken up by different feminist scholars, are the primary tools guiding the work of this thesis. However, when encountering obstacles and problems that these tools have not been able to solve I have turned to other strands of theory. Throughout the process of developing my theoretical tool box I have had great help from from the theoretical plane forged out by Maria Tamboukou, in which she has made connections between Foucauldian and Deleuzian analytics, critical feminisms and narratives (Tamboukou, 2003a, 2003b, 2008) I have also found useful tools in critical geography, narrative theory and the sociology of emotion.

In the rest of this chapter, I will, drawing on feminist interrogations of Foucault's work, discuss the relationship between power, resistance and subjectivity and its implications for a narrative analysis of women's personal narratives about prostitution experience. Through this discussion I will introduce you to the overall theoretical framework and theoretical points of departure of the thesis. However, as the thesis unfolds other theoretical tools, within the overall theoretical framework, will be introduced. These tools will be introduced where they are applied in the text, where I have encountered obstacles in the analysis that have required them. I have chosen to introduce these tools as they are 'picked up' in the analysis because I believe it will make more sense to the reader as opposed to me throwing all my tools on the table from the start. Even though I, encouraged by Foucault's refusal of closed theoretical frameworks and Braidotti's call for feminists to engage in what she jokingly refers to as 'feminist dirty minded thinking' (an idiosyncratic and hybrid thinking avoiding to treat any one theory as the path to truth), draw on a range of different theoretical resources, I want to assure the reader that these tools are not picked up randomly but are all selected from related theoretical and epistemological fields (Braidotti & Butler, 1994, p. 58).

As I stated before, the rest of the chapter is structured by questions regarding power and subjectivity that have arisen in the space which encounters between Foucault and feminism have produced. The topics that I will discuss are: the tension between a non-essentialist position on the formation of subjectivity and the specificity of gender issues, sexual sameness/difference - sexuality as a social as well as a bodily phenomenon, power, resistance and agency, making a distinction between power and domination, and, the place of women's experience in acting to change the world. Through this discussion I will present my perspective on power, domination, resistance, subjectivity and agency.

## Non-essentialist subjectivity and the specificity of gender issues

Foucault's thought has a non-essentialist position on the formation of subjectivity. Subjects are seen as not fixed by nature, but socially constituted. Such thought calls, with the words of John Rajchman for: "*a practice which is a matter neither of finding a true nature nor of obeying an incontrovertible principle*" (Rajchman, 1986, p. 166). In such a practice, the central question is not who we essentially are, but who we have been constituted to be, and who we might become. Foucault was interested in what ways we have been constituted as the subjects of our sexual experience. He proposed to study how subjects are "*gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, et cetera.*" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 97).

Despite his lack of direct engagement with feminist issues, Foucault was sympathetic towards the feminist cause, especially as pertaining to the making visible of how sexuality had been constructed around sexual difference. He states that "*the real strength of the women's liberation movement is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but that they have actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of "sexuality"*" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 220).

Joan Scott calls, like Foucault, for a historicization and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference. Scott discusses gender as an analytical category. She terms 'woman' as an "*at once empty and overflowing category.*" Empty because it has no essence, no ultimate transcendent meaning. Overflowing because even if it might appear to be fixed it still has "*alternative, denied or suppressed definitions*" (Scott, 1986, p. 1074). The binary opposition male/female should be seen as problematic rather than known, and as constructed and contextually defined. Scott (1986) suggests that analyzing how these binary oppositions operate takes asking questions of what is at stake when we use gender to explain or justify positions, and how implicit understandings of gender are reproduced.

Even though the deconstruction or destabilization of conventional sexual categories could be seen as a central quest within feminist theory, much of the work, both theoretical and practical, has centred on analyzing specific aspects of the feminine condition (McNay, 1993). Critics of Foucault's desexualization of the subject claim that, when moving beyond the categories of masculine and feminine there is the risk of bereaving feminism of its cohesive element – individuals being sexed female and socially constructed as women (McNay,

1993). These critics argue that even though there have been great achievements within poststructuralist philosophy in terms of breaking the chain of power, knowledge, and being, the costs of this, including the death of the subject, are high (Downs, 1993; Soper, 1993). I will now turn to the debate on these costs in terms of the tension between a non-essentialist position on the formation of subjectivity and the specificity of gender issues.

Laura Downs (1993) argues that even though there are liberating aspects of an understanding of woman as category given its meaning in discourse, the cost of liberation by deconstruction is high. The cost, according to Downs, consists of the deprivation of what she terms an 'authentic, meaningful subjectivity'. She criticizes Scott for being more concerned with gender as a metaphor for power than with gender as a lived social relation. This type of deconstruction and desexualization of the subject is seen as undermining feminism since it only provides half a strategy, a strategy that in Downs' words "*decenters woman as a textual and social construct, but leaves aside the dilemmas of women, who must live as subjects in time*" (Downs, 1993, p. 436). She argues that sexual difference is not something that easily can be deconstructed and left behind but that individuals must inhabit gendered categories even when they strive to deconstruct them.

Downs' criticism is relevant to my research since adopting a deconstructive approach to women's personal narratives of prostitution might provoke similar criticism. When setting out to deconstruct 'woman' and the sexualized other of 'woman' - 'the prostitute', how does that pertain to the embodied empirical lives of women with prostitution experience? Arguing with Foucault, a possible response to this could be that women's needs and sufferings spring from the ways in which women are positioned as 'women', and in the case of my research as 'prostitutes'. This positioning occurs both in discursive and non-discursive practices. Thereby an analysis of women's personal narratives about prostitution experience must contain a critical inquiry of how women are constructed as particular subjects, as 'prostitutes'.

I find Denise Riley's conceptualisation of 'women' as a simultaneous foundation of, and irritant to, feminism interesting (Riley, 1988, p. 17). She states that: "*Feminism must be agile enough to say: 'Now we will be 'women' – but now we will be persons, not these 'women'.*" (Riley, 1988, p. 113). In discussing the point of interrogating the constancy of 'men' and 'women' she refers to Foucault and his definition of the purpose of history as: not to discover the roots of our

identity but to commit itself to its dissipation (Riley, 1988, p. 5). Riley is aware that critics might question the point with dissipated identities; is not the point with feminism to constitute and consolidate a new progressive identity of women that historically has been misidentified and made invisible? There is an analogy here to sex work feminist rhetoric, in which ‘the prostitute’ is reconstructed as ‘the sex worker’, a new progressive (counter)identity. I agree with Riley when she states that feminism must negotiate the quicksand of ‘women’ without settling on either identities or counter identities. This does not mean the loss of our identities but rather that our identities will be understood as a site of differences rather than an essence.

### Sexual sameness/difference - sexuality as a social as well as a bodily phenomenon

The work of Foucault has been significant in developing the view that not only gender but also sex and bodies are social constructions (Ramazanoğlu (ed.), 1993). Foucault theorizes the body as a product of normative effects, an object and target for power. Foucault saw bodies as disciplined by different technologies of power including the technologies that we exercise over our own bodies. Sexuality is here seen as one of the main poles of power (Braidotti, 1991). Although Foucault did not abstract his analysis from material existence, his theorization of the body is anti-essentialist but does not deny the materiality of the body, feminist critics have found his stress on social construction both useful and problematic (Ramazanoğlu (ed.), 1993, p. 7).

The theorization of bodies and sexuality as social constructions produced as effects of power has been employed by feminist scholars to analyze the body without resorting to biologism and essentialism (Diamond & Quinby (ed.), 1988). In her seminal work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) questions the distinction of sex and gender, within a Foucauldian framework. In interrogating ‘the irreducibility of the materiality of sex’, Butler challenges the idea that sex is pre-discursive and prior to gender. Gender is instead, according to Butler, an “*apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established*” (Butler, 1990, p. 10). In *Bodies that matter*, Butler suggests “*a return to the notion of matter (...) as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*” (Butler, 1993, p. xviii). Materialization is here referred to as the process in which the subject comes into being by means of reiterated ‘citation of the norm’. By performing normative femininity/masculinity the authority of the norm is reproduced.

While feminists like Butler have made use of Foucault to desexualize the body, other feminists are critical of such an approach. In the introduction to *Up against Foucault* Caroline Ramazanoğlu states that “*Foucault’s version of social construction does not resolve problems about how we understand the body from the vantage point of subordinated women’s bodily experiences*” (Ramazanoğlu (ed.), 1993, p. 7). Foucault’s indifference to sexual difference, even though unintended, could be seen as reproducing the sexism that permeates social theory. Ramazanoğlu & Holland see the political strategies for struggles regarding bodies and pleasures, which feminists can draw from Foucault, as limited by his theory of power resting on a masculine conception of ‘man’. They go on saying: “*Foucault treats the body as it was one, as if bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life*” (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 1993, p. 250). Foucault is here being criticized for not paying enough attention to the gendered nature of technologies on the body. Feminist critics argue that sex as technology has different implications for male and female subjects (de Lauretis, 1987; Braidotti, 1991; Ramazanoğlu & Holland 1993). Some questions raised by these critics are: Does the fact that we live our social lives in physical bodies, and so are differently embodied as male or female, have any bearing on the exercise of power? (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 1993, p. 248) and How might material life structure, constrain or interact with social life; how far are docile bodies materially embodied (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 1993, p. 260)?

In doing research on women’s personal narratives about prostitution experience discourses on female and male sexuality are central. In radical feminist discourse on prostitution, prostitution is seen as a form of male dominance connected to male biology. Male sexuality is here associated with lust, violence and objectification. Without resorting to this type of biologism, I believe that, in analyzing personal experience narratives on prostitution, the social sexuality - gendered desire produced by power, and the bodily sexuality - the difference in embodiment between women and men, are both relevant. With this in mind I turn to Rosi Braidotti’s attempts to bridge the gap between the critical notions of ‘sexual difference’ and ‘gender’.

Braidotti (1991) criticizes Foucault for, despite his extensive analysis of power, the body and sexuality, failing in raising issues linked to women and female sexuality. The starting point for her work is the political will to assert the specificity of the lived, female bodily experience. Braidotti makes a call for a

renewal of the interest in the sex-specific nature of the subject. In this quest she argues that the central issue is “*how to create, legitimate, and represent a multiplicity of alternative forms of feminist subjectivity without falling into either a new essentialism or a new relativism*” (Braidotti, 1991, p. 40). Braidotti (1994) argues that when speaking about subjectivity one must begin with the idea of embodiment. The embodied subject is neither an essence nor a biological destiny, but rather one’s primary location in the world. Embodiment is then the situated nature of subjectivity. Sexual difference is to be defined positively, not to construct a new nominal definition of woman but to, in discourse, express differences between the sexes, differences inscribed in the anatomy but primarily in the imaginary. The body is viewed as “*an interface or a field of intersections of material and symbolic forces*” (Braidotti, 1991, p. 219). Tamboukou (2003a) sees Braidotti’s analysis of sexual difference as compatible with what Teresa de Lauretis has suggested, feminist theory is about:

Feminist theory is all about an essential difference, an irreducible difference, though not a difference between man and woman, nor a difference inherent in ‘woman’s nature’ (in woman as nature), but a difference in the feminist conception of woman, women and the world (de Lauretis, 1991, p. 209)

I see Braidotti’s idea of difference as an interesting outlook on sexuality in relation to my research. Braidotti’s three categories of difference: difference between men and women, difference between women, and differences within each woman translates well to my interest in differences between and within women with experience of prostitution (Braidotti, 1994). Studying women’s personal narratives about prostitution experience moreover ties into the wider political project of asserting the specificity of lived, female bodily experiences.

### Power, resistance and agency

As stated before, Foucault had a non-essentialist view on subjectivity. In his earlier work one of his main concerns was how the subject is constituted by disciplinary technologies of power and how these technologies produce docile bodies. In this work he theorized power as an objectivizing force, a force which transforms individuals into objects or docile bodies. Technologies of power are thus the practices that “*determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject*” (as cited in Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 107). Some feminists have criticized Foucault’s theorization as leading to nothing but the inevitability of domination (Soper, 1993). Lois McNay (1993) claims that there is a discrepancy between Foucault’s theorization of power as

diffused and productive and his studies of power relations where power was revealed as monolithic dominating force. If the subject is constituted by power relations, what room is there for resistance? Foucault responded to this type of criticism by stating that power and resistance are inevitably linked together, where there is power there will be resistance (Foucault, 1990).

Foucault's last published writings, including the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* and some of his later interviews and essays have been seen by many critics as marking a break in his work. There is a change in theoretical focus from the body to the self and his work is supplemented by what is referred to as the genealogy of the desiring subject. By this Foucault meant an exploration and analysis of the practices by which individuals were lead to focus attention on themselves and acknowledge themselves as subjects. His earlier work on the ways in which the subject is constituted as an object of power/knowledge (objectification) was complemented by an exploration and analysis of the active practices of self-formation (subjectification). What he referred to as technologies of the self. In this late work of Foucault, power is installed within the self, through technologies of the self and the care of the self - notions of self-mastery, self-transformation, and the active creation of the self. Foucault argued that, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the modern subject, an analysis of technologies of power had to be counterbalanced with an analysis of technologies of the self (McNay, 1992, p. 134).

Feminist critics have despite this criticized Foucault's theory for dissolving the agency of the human subject and replacing it with a passive conception. Other feminists have argued, in favour for Foucault, that even though the subject is socially constructed in discursive practices, it none the less exists as a thinking, feeling and social subject, capable of resistance (Ransom, 1993; Sawicki, 1991; Weedon, 1987). Technologies of power are counterbalanced with technologies of the self. The individual is no longer seen as only a docile body, but is attributed a degree of agency and self-determination. There are tendencies within some feminist analysis to regard women as powerless and innocent victims of patriarchal structures. There is also a call from other feminist theorists for a more complex and differentiated analysis of the relations between gender and power, an analysis that take account of women's agency within social constraints (Ransom, 1993; Sawicki, 1991; Weedon, 1987). McNay argues that Foucault's idea of technologies of the self could be seen as paralleling developments in the feminist analysis of women's oppression that seek to avoid positioning women as powerless victims of patriarchal structures of domination (McNay, 1993, p. 66).

As previously mentioned the structure/agency divide is central to prostitution research. There is a tendency to resort to an either/or-analysis of prostitution, viewing prostitution as either empowerment or exploitation, a result of free will or coercion (Phoenix, 1999). Foucault's theory about the way human beings are made subject involves both technologies of power and technologies of the self and allows for an exploration of both power and resistance. For Foucault, power and resistance are inevitably linked together. The subject is both socially constructed through discursive practices and able to reflect on and resist the very discursive relations that constitute it (Foucault, 1988a, p. 123). By positioning the subject in relations of power/resistance, Foucault suggests a dialectic relationship between power and resistance.

Foucault theorized power as a force that is never entirely repressive. Power does not emanate from particular bodies or structures, it cannot be reduced to the institutionalized power of the state or institutions. Instead, power is viewed as a network of relations and effects. What this implies is that subjectivities are never entirely formed by exterior or imposing forces of power, but are, instead, made through the technologies of power *and* the active practices of self-formation, technologies of the self. There is a tension between technologies of power and technologies of the self, technologies of the self always takes place in relation to technologies of power, in the form of an imposed set of norms. As Butler eloquently puts it:

The norm does not produce the subject as its necessary effect, nor is the subject fully free to disregard the norm that inaugurates its reflexivity; one invariably struggles with the conditions of one's own life that one could not have chosen. If there is an operation of agency or, indeed, freedom in this struggle, it takes place in the context of an enabling and limiting field of constraint. This ethical agency is neither fully determined nor radically free. Its struggle or primary dilemma is to be produced by a world, even as one must produce oneself in some way. This struggle with the unchosen condition's of one's life, a struggle – an agency – is also made possible, paradoxically, by the persistence of this primary condition of un-freedom (Butler, 2005, p. 19).

Butler argues that while many feminist critics have claimed that Foucault's theorization of the subject undermines human agency, Foucault rather turns to agency in new ways that deserves consideration (Butler, 2005, p. 19). Prostitution research needs a theory that can account for both processes of normalization

and resistance, a theory that encompasses the complexities and intricacies of the power/resistance relationships that are central to prostitution experience. I see Foucault's theorization of the subject as a tool to challenge the structure/agency divide imbued in prostitution discourse. It offers an analytical framework that is sensitive to the interrelated structural and agentic aspects of prostitution experience.

### Making a distinction between power and domination

Some feminists have criticized Foucault's theorization of 'power as everywhere' for foreclosing a distinction of the differences in power between the oppressors and the oppressed (McLaren, 2002). It is argued that Foucault's theorization of power cannot account for the asymmetry of gendered power relations and therefore lacks grounding for an emancipatory politics. However, this critique disregards Foucault's distinction between power and domination. Relations of power are seen as changeable, reversible and unstable:

One must observe also that there cannot be relations of power unless the subjects are free. If one or the other were completely at the disposition of the other and became his thing, an object on which he can exercise an infinite and unlimited violence, there would not be relations of power. In order to exercise a relation of power, there must on both sides at least exist a certain form of liberty (Foucault, 1988b, p. 12)

In a state of domination on the other hand there is no liberty. In *The ethics of care for the self as a practice of freedom* Foucault defines a state of domination as a state in which the relations of power are firmly set and congealed (Foucault, 1988b). In such a state an individual or a social group has managed to block a field of relations of power, "to render them impassive and invariable and to prevent all reversibility of movement – by means of instruments which can be economic as well as political or military" (Foucault, 1988b, p. 114). I argue that prostitution is characterized both by relations of power and states of domination. Women involved in prostitution narrate about a multitude of strategies to negotiate, resist and destabilize power, some women make sense of prostitution in itself as a tactic to resist victimization or poverty. At the same time intersecting structures of class, gender and ethnicity permeating the institution of prostitution could indeed be understood as firmly set and congealed. At certain times and in certain situations these structures produce states of domination. The violence and coercion that some women in prostitution are subjected to, no matter if it is

limited to one encounter or if it is something that characterizes their prostitution experience for a longer period of time, is best described as states of domination. McLaren (2002) argues that Foucault's ideas about resistance to domination correspond to feminists' interests in theorizing the possibility of agency under oppression, and collective social and political transformation through the reversal of power or the end of a state of domination. I see Foucault's rich account of power, and his distinction between power and domination, as a sophisticated and useful tool in analyzing the violence, power and resistance that permeates prostitution without either trivializing oppression or obscuring agency.

### The place of women's experience in acting to change the world

So far I have discussed: the tension between a non-essentialist position on the formation of subjectivity and the specificity of gender issues – woman as the site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences; sexuality as a social as well as a bodily phenomenon – embodiment as the situated nature of subjectivity; power, resistance and agency – Foucault's theorization of the subject as a tool to challenge the structure/agency divide imbued in prostitution discourse; making a distinction between power and domination – Foucault's distinction between power and domination as a useful tool in analyzing prostitution without neither trivializing oppression nor obscuring agency.

What then do feminist interrogations on Foucault tell us about the place of women's experience in acting to change the world?

The tension between seeing experience as 'true' and 'factual' and experience as constructed and made meaningful by language is as contested in feminism as in other areas of social theory (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 1993). In her classic article, *Experience as Evidence*, Scott (1991) criticizes the idea of experience as a naturalized category from a Foucauldian standpoint. She argues that the understanding of experience, not only as truth, but as the most authentic kind of truth, builds on the notion of seeing as the origin of knowing and "*vision as being a direct apprehension of a world of transparent objects*" (Scott, 1991, p. 775). With such a view, experience is separated from language and created as a realm of reality outside of discourse. In her critique, Scott emphasizes the productive qualities of discourse, arguing that experience is not something that individuals have, but rather something that is produced. Subjects are constituted through experience. She theorizes experience as something that is at once already an interpretation and something to interpret. Experience is thereby not the origin

of our explanation, not the evidence, but rather that which we try to explain, “*that about which knowledge is produced*” (Scott, 1991, p. 780).

Experience will from a Foucauldian perspective be considered as a discursive construct, rather than an indisputable point of reference (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 115). Tamboukou argues that women’s personal narratives should not be taken as evidence or “*indisputable documents of life, but rather as discursively constructed narratives, which however, have recorded and revealed various and significant processes in the constitution of the female subject*” (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 115). Even though experience is not seen as a mere reflection of ‘reality’, this does not preclude the importance of experience in the realm of knowledge production.

Rajchman discusses the ethic of Foucault as an ethic of how we are said to be, and, what therefore, it is possible for us to become:

The central topic in the “modern practical philosophy” I want to attribute to Foucault is different from the traditional ones of finding the nature of the good life for Man and how to live it, or determining the principle of our mutual obligations and how to follow it. His was an ethic neither of prudence nor of duty. Rather, it was an ethic of who we are said to be, and, what, therefore, it is possible for us to become. The issues it raises are issues about the various means through which we come to be constituted as the subjects of our own experience (Rajchman, 1986, p. 166).

Foucault sought to raise questions about who we might become, in our thinking as well as in our lives. Foucault argued that women and other subordinates could destabilize power by seeking shifting, local and specific points of resistance (Ramazanoğlu, 1993). Though Foucault did not take a particular interest in women’s experience this does not mean that the theoretical toolbox that his work offers us cannot be applied in doing so. As de Lauretis puts it - even though Foucault’s theory excludes the consideration of gender, it does not preclude it (de Lauretis, 1987, p. 3).

Jana Sawicki (1991) suggests that genealogical critique is Foucault’s alternative to a traditional revolutionary theory. Working genealogically, asking questions about how our present has been constituted in ways that seem natural and indisputable to us, can lead us to become more free to imagine other ways of being (Tamboukou, 2003c). Foucault’s genealogy thus attempts to free us from

the oppressive effects of prevailing modes of self-understanding. In applying Foucault's theoretical tools in an analysis of women's personal narratives about prostitution experience, one practical consequence may be that the constitution of female subjects can be revealed and thereby new ways of becoming woman can become attainable.

After having explored some of the issues that have emerged in the space which encounters between Foucault and feminism have produced, I now proceed to the methodological chapter, in which I will introduce a genealogical approach to narrative analysis.

## 3. A GENEALOGICAL APPROACH TO NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

When taking a class on narrative analysis I was introduced to Tamboukou's work on a genealogical approach to narratives. With a genealogical approach to narrative analysis, narratives are understood through the structures and forces of discourse, power and history as theorized by Foucault (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 102).

### 3.1 What is genealogy?

Genealogy is an aspect of Foucault's methodology developed in his later work. Its main focus is the interplay between power, knowledge and the body. Genealogy is originally a Nietzschean concept redeployed in Foucault's work. In his essay *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, Foucault (1986) positions genealogy in relation to 'traditional history', a history concerned with origins and essences. He claims that social formations do not have origins and essences but rather emerge from "numberless beginnings", 'accidents', 'minute deviations', 'errors', 'false appraisals' and 'faulty calculations' (Foucault, 1986, p. 81.) Foucault describes genealogy as a history of the present, a history of how the present has been constituted in ways that seem natural and indisputable to us, but are only the effects of certain historical, social, cultural, political and economic configurations (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 101). Calling grand historical 'truths' into question, Foucault's genealogies writes the histories of marginal, unknown and excluded discourses (Bell, 1994, p. 10)

Central to Foucault's theoretical thought is the idea that truth cannot be separated from the procedures of its production (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 102). Foucault questioned the idea that truth and knowledge exist independent of power.

He suggested that, like everything else, truth and knowledge have a history, a history which is tied to transformations in relations of power. Genealogy is thus concerned with the processes whereby truth and knowledge are produced as power effects. Foucault started his genealogies with a question formulated in the present, and then traced how social phenomena was constructed in the past. By laying bare the struggles of the past, genealogy attempts to trace possible ways of thinking differently rather than accepting and legitimizing what are considered the ‘truths’ of the present (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, p. 9).

Genealogy moreover maps the relationship between power/knowledge and the body. The body is described as “*the target and object of power*” (Foucault, 1991, p. 136). Tamboukou and Ball claim that genealogy addresses “*the importance of the body as the site of interaction of material and symbolic forces, a battlefield of power relations and antagonistic discourses*” (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, p. 6). In his genealogies Foucault explores the diverse historical processes which have ascribed meaning to human bodies.

Foucault’s genealogies are histories, histories that in his own words attempted “to give some assistance in wearing away certain self-evidences and commonplaces about madness, normality, illness, crime and punishment (...) to contribute to changing certain things in people’s ways of perceiving and doing things” (Burchell, Gordon & Miller (eds.), 1991, p. 83). So what does Foucault’s historical work have to do with personal narratives?

### **3.2 Genealogy and narratives**

Foucault himself did not work with personal narratives, his data mostly consisted of historical documents from the archives of prisons, asylums and clinics. However, Tamboukou argues that there are important connections to be made between genealogy and narratives.

Tamboukou’s own work is centered on the constitution of the female self (Tamboukou, 2003a, 2010a). In her research, she traces the emergence of the female self in the social, political and cultural milieu of the turn of the nineteenth century (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 102). The narratives she studies consist of auto/biographical texts written by women teachers and artists. Tamboukou argues that narratives can be a valuable addition to a genealogists’ archive because like other texts they operate as a “*medium through which connections are made and regimes of truth are established*” (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 110). She uses

genealogical analyses to examine narratives through the structures and forces of discourse, power and history. Tamboukou contends that “*narrative research creates a rich archive for understanding how ‘realities’ – be they social or personal, past or present – are being constructed*” (Tamboukou, 2008a, p 116).

As opposed to Tamboukou’s studies, my study is not a genealogy, it is however a study in which genealogical tactics are employed. Tamboukou (2008a) argues that a genealogical reading of narratives raises a range of problems, questions and tactics. In the following two sections I will discuss how I frame the participants’ narratives in relation to problems and questions raised by a genealogical perspective. After that I will turn to a discussion on how I will employ particular genealogical tactics in the thesis.

### Personal narratives about prostitution experience as subjugated knowledge

One of the key processes in genealogy is focusing on what has been relegated or kept silent (Tamboukou, 2003a). As stated before, in shifting the focus from what prostitution is to how it operates, I am particularly concerned with what narratives do, or with the words of Tamboukou ‘the narrative modalities of how power operates as productive’. Tamboukou argues that the narrative modalities of how power have to do with: “*the way power intervenes in creating conditions of possibility for specific narratives to emerge as dominant and for others to become marginalized*” (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 104). As discussed in Chapter One, historically, women (men and transgender individuals) involved in prostitution have had little access to the discourses with which their lives have been entangled. Their knowledge has been subjugated, meaning it has been marginalized, miscredited and ignored. Today dominant narratives about ‘the prostitute’ are challenged by personal narratives about prostitution experience. Within feminist research, personal narratives about prostitution have been made central in theorizing prostitution, but since the prostitution field is ideologically charged, depending on the analytical focus and within which discourse research is produced, certain narratives about prostitution have been silenced, contested or accepted. Universalizing theories about prostitution have subjugated certain knowledges.

With a genealogical approach I will explore personal narratives about prostitution experience as subjugated knowledge. The focus on subjugated knowledges reveals struggles and the relationship between truth and power. As Foucault states:

What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchies and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a true science and its objects (Foucault, 1980b, p. 83)

Women narrate about their experience on a field of power/knowledge relations, subjugating some knowledges while privileging others. Recognizing subjugated knowledge requires engaging with the narratives of the subjugated group. Complicating the situation is that there are multiple subjugated knowledges. This is certainly true for personal narratives about prostitution experience. Prostitution is made sense of in multiple ways and narrated about from multiple positions. Within a particular narrative there might be narrative themes that are subjugated by dominant themes. Exploring personal narratives as subjugated knowledges entails engaging with the multiple layers of meaning both between and within personal narratives.

### Narratives as technologies of power and technologies of the self

As stated in the previous chapter the relationships between power/knowledge, discourse and subjectivity in Foucault's work are complex. The subject is both constituted in discourse but also capable to resist the very discursive practices that constitute her. McLaren states that:

The relationships among power, disciplines, discourse and subjectivity are complex. Disciplines produce subjects, discourses produce subjects, subjects are the effects of power. In turn, disciplines, discourses and power are each themselves complex; power is relational, discourses are polyvalent, and disciplines are multifarious. Subjects thus produced are likewise complex, both she who is speaking and she who is spoken of, both dominated and resisters, both constrained and enabled by various disciplines, practices and institutions (McLaren, 2002, p. 59).

McLaren describes the subject as "*both she who is speaking and she who is spoken of, both dominated and resisters*". Based on this type of understanding of the subject, Tamboukou theorizes narratives as both technologies of power and technologies of the self. She views narratives as "*a discursive regime wherein the female self is being constituted through procedures of objectification – wherein she is categorized, distributed and manipulated –and procedures of subjectification*

– *ways she actively turn herself into a subject*” (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 107). In this thesis, narratives will be analyzed both as technologies of power and as technologies of the self. An understanding of narratives as both technologies of the self and technologies of power stipulates that although subjects live and construct stories about themselves, these stories also live and construct subjects. The participants are both the object and the subject of discourse. In the analysis I will explore how the participants both draw on and positions themselves against dominant narratives about who they are as particular subjects, as ‘prostitutes’. I will explore how the participants narrate themselves in relation to dominant discourses on prostitution and how they create counter-narratives by which they challenge who they have been constituted to be as ‘prostitutes’. These narratives will be viewed as, what Tamboukou theorises as, *technologies of resistance*, “*the subjective capacities developed in the attempt to resist the power that makes women what they are*” (Tamboukou, 2000).

Through their involvement in the study the research participants are encouraged to speak of themselves and their experiences. This self-representation will, with a genealogical approach to personal narratives, be seen as a technology of the self. The narratives will be understood as the site in which the complex process of subject-formation takes place. Narratives are thus the site where agency emerges, the narrator is seen as an active participant in the creation of her narrative and her self. Through their participation in the study the research participants do not only narrate their prostitution experience but also explore it and attempt to make sense of it. In this work they narrate themselves as subjects of rational action and create themselves as ethical subjects.

### **3.3 Genealogical tactics**

So far I have framed the narratives in this study as subjugated knowledges and as technologies of power as well as technologies of the self (and technologies of resistance). I will now turn to a set of genealogical tactics that I will employ in order to contextualise the participants’ narratives and to distance myself from the discourses of the present.

#### **Prostitution as a dispositif**

A genealogical approach to narratives entails the contextualization of personal narratives in a grid of power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices, what Foucault terms a *dispositif*.

Tamboukou states that while in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault made the distinction between discursive and non-discursive formations but dealt only with the former, in the genealogical project of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault came to abandon this dualism and proposed the art of drawing a map or a cartography to show how discursive and non-discursive formations are connected (Tamboukou, 2000). Foucault referred to such a cartography as a dispositif. Discursive practices can be defined as “*speaking and thinking on the basis of knowledge*” and non-discursive practices as “*acting on the basis of knowledge*” (Jäger, 2001, p. 35). The dispositif is the synthesis of discursive and non-discursive practices as well as materializations, “*material products of acting on the basis of knowledge*” (Jäger, 2001, p. 35).

In the words of Foucault, a dispositif is composed of:

...discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, policy decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic, moral and philanthropic propositions; in sum, the said and un-said (Foucault, 1980d, p. 194)

The dispositif itself consists of the network of relations which can be established between these components. The dispositif in this study, is thus a cartography of the power relations and discursive as well as non-discursive practices surrounding and traversing the female self in prostitution. A dispositif analysis is not about finding the essence or substance of a social structure or phenomenon in order to understand what it is. It is rather about understanding what it does, how it operates as “*a machinic contraption*” (Rabinow & Rose (2003) p. 10). The methodological concept of the dispositif is thus a central analytical tool employed in my attempt to shift the focus from what prostitution is to how it operates.

The methodological concept of the dispositif will also be used as an analytical tool to contextualize the personal narratives by exploring the specific historical, cultural and social conditions in which they are produced. Prostitution is often times treated as something given, a premise, the world’s oldest profession, and as something self-evidently conceptualized and defined, that is: prostitution as the exchange of money for sex, i.e. the prostitution act. Viewing prostitution as a dispositif implies seeing prostitution as both an act and an institution, a set of relations, discourses and practices that make prostitution possible. The dispositif of prostitution constitutes a vast assemblage of competing and contradictory forces which define, order and regulate people involved in it.

In his 1992 essay entitled “*What is a dispositif?*”, Gilles Deleuze describes the dispositif as a tangle, a multilinear ensemble. In the genealogical practice of untangling the dispositif it is suggested that there are lines of light, lines of force and lines of subjectification emerging from each dispositif.

The lines of light, inseparable from the dispositif, are what structures the light, making certain things visible and others invisible:

Each apparatus has its way of structuring light, the way in which it falls, blurs and disperses, distributing the visible and the invisible, giving birth to objects that are dependent on it for their existence, and causing them to disappear (Deleuze, 1992, p. 160).

The dispositif of prostitution, I would say, creates a lot of, what Tamboukou (2003c) names, regimes of shadow and darkness. The most obvious being that even though the prostitution act obviously stipulates two parties, one buying and one selling, the analytical foci, the light, almost exclusively falls on ‘the prostitute’ leaving ‘the client’ in the shadow. Another example could be the binary construction of structure/agency, where either structural force or human agency is made visible at the cost of the other.

Understanding the lines of force, being the dimension of power, connecting different zones and layers within the dispositif of women involved in prostitution, for me, begins with the understanding of prostitution as a phenomenon situated in a grid of intersecting power relations of gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality. Prostitution is moreover a phenomenon related to a number of foundational philosophical issues and terms such as freedom of choice, equality, agency, victimhood, et cetera. Discourses about prostitution are more than ‘just about prostitution’, they touch on ideas of (hetero)sexuality, femininity, masculinity, work, violence and power.

Prostitution is neither transhistorical nor acultural, it is situated in specific historical, societal and cultural contexts with practices sustained by certain knowledges. Knowledges, for example, produced within a vast number of academic disciplines, such as criminology, sociology, sexology, psychology and history. In academic writing ‘the prostitute’ has been analyzed, pathologized as well as celebrated. The context of the study is contemporary Sweden. Prostitution that, within Sweden’s legal framework, used to be conceived as a problem of public health, public nuisance and sexual moral is now first and foremost conceived

as a social problem and a problem of gender (in)equality. This conception of prostitution leads to particular forms of interventions into the lives of women involved in prostitution and is thus part of structuring their experiences. Viewing prostitution as a *dispositif* entails not seeing it as transhistorical and acultural but rather as a constantly changing assemblage of forces that respond to the conditions of the present.

Finally, lines of subjectification are, according to Deleuze, what stops the *dispositif* from “*becoming locked into unbreakable lines of force*” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 161). Lines of subjectification deriving from the production of subjectivities are the escaping dimensions of power and knowledge, lines of escape. These lines I understand as challenging the discursive as well as the non-discursive practices, through the unangling of the self.

Following Foucault’s idea of the *dispositif* as the starting point for a genealogy I began the analysis by creating a cartography of the context in which the participants’ narratives emerged. Drawing on the participants’ narratives I made a sketch of the connections between the multiple discourses, practices, institutions, policies and laws, et cetera. that enabled and constrained the participants’ experiences of prostitution as well as their narratives about these experiences. Viewing prostitution as a *dispositif* entails a shift from a search for what prostitution is to how the constantly shifting *dispositif* of prostitution works to structure what can be known and said about prostitution. How it works to produce certain forms of experiences and narratives about prostitution and how it shapes ‘the prostitute’ as a particular subject. Making sense of prostitution experience is an embodied and embedded process, shaped by materialities and institutions, the cultural, economic and social context in which prostitution takes place, and prevailing understandings of prostitution. This combination of factors make possible, sustain and reproduce particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience. Throughout the analysis I will explore how the *dispositif* of prostitution operates to produce certain experiences of prostitution and how it enables and constrains the participants’ narratives.

### Tracing critical moments in the construction of prostitution discourse

A genealogy begins with an “*interrogation of what has been accepted as the ‘truth’, any truth concerning the ways individuals understand themselves as subjects of this world*” (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 214). As stated previously, Foucault refers to genealogy as a history of the present. In his genealogical work, Foucault sought to trace the development of knowledges and their power effects in order to reveal

something about the character of power/knowledge in the present. Foucault's genealogies thus equip us with critical tools to understand how our present and our subjectivities have been produced by historical forces.

As discussed previously, prostitution is a difficult and contested field overloaded and invested by a series of antagonistic discourses, practices and ideologies. Despite this, prostitution is, in popular discourse, often constituted as something self-evident, 'sex for money', and something transhistorical, 'the world's oldest profession'. Within prostitution research prostitution is, depending on theoretical and analytical focus, analyzed diametrically different, as a patriarchal institution and a form of violence against women, as a form of work, and/or as a sexual expression. The prostitution field is politically and ideologically charged and to a large degree characterized by universalizing theories, aiming to reveal 'the truth' about prostitution. The politicized nature of the subject, and the fact that research is produced in a field fraught with tension and antagonistic understandings of prostitution, often lead to fixed positionalities and heated debates. In these debates, the constructions of 'the prostitute' range from 'victim of patriarchy' to sexual entrepreneur'. Tamboukou argues that: "*Instead of asking in which kinds of discourse we are entitled to believe, Foucault's genealogies pose the question of which kinds of practices, linked to which kinds of external conditions determine the different knowledges in which we ourselves figure* (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 202). Foucault argued that we are all caught up in 'regimes of truth'. In order to distance myself from the antagonist 'truths' of the present I will as a part of the study explore how they were constructed in the past.

David Scott (1999) argues that genealogy is not only about enabling marginalized subjects and subjugated knowledges to be heard, he claims that a more strategic use of genealogical tactics is to investigate how these subjects were produced as marginal in the first place. This is not a historical study, however, as a means to distance myself from the present and explore how 'the prostitute' has been constructed as a marginal subject in the past I will as part of the thesis explore the historical development of discourse on prostitution and 'the prostitute'. In Chapter Five, I will thus trace some critical moments in the history of the construction of prostitution discourse in Sweden. By tracing these moments I do not attempt to reconstruct the past or create a history of prostitution but rather try to reveal something about the power/knowledge of the present in which the research participants are trying to make sense of their experiences of prostitution.

### Remaining on the surface of analysis

The last genealogical tactic that I will employ in the analysis is, what Tamboukou terms, surface analysis. Tamboukou states that *"one critical point of genealogy is that there are no final 'truths' about our nature or the norms our reason dictates us and therefore there is no essential, natural, or inevitable way of grouping or classifying people."* (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 36). Analyzing narratives with a genealogical approach does not entail attempting to look beyond or behind a social practice to find an essential meaning or function, the aim is rather to look more closely at the practice and the ways meanings are created and assigned in particular sites, at particular times and in dialogue with dominant discourses (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 36). Instead of trying to determine what prostitution is, or treat narratives as more or less 'true', I will carefully explore how women make sense of their prostitution experience in relation to dominant discourses.

Genealogy describes rather than explains, Foucault described genealogical methods as 'flat and empirical' (Middleton, 2003, p. 43). Tamboukou states *"Instead of going deep, looking for origins and hidden meanings, the analyst is working on the surface"* (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 36). In my analysis this means I will, following Tamboukou, not attempt to explore how the participants 'really' think or feel about prostitution but how they in their narratives make connections and create oppositions with dominant discourses on prostitution. Surface analysis entails treating narratives as multiplicities of meaning and exploring how different narratives connects with other narratives, discourses and practices in shaping meanings (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 111).

## **4. NARRATING, TRANSCRIBING AND TRANSLATING STORIES ABOUT PROSTITUTION EXPERIENCE**

After having introduced the theoretical points of departure and the methodological tools of the thesis I now turn to the process of narrating, transcribing and translating stories about prostitution experience. In this chapter I will introduce and discuss the participant selection strategy, the interview method and how I have approached transcribing and translating the interviews. I end the chapter with a discussion on ethical considerations.

### **4.1 Recruiting research participants**

Considering the challenges that the diversity of the prostitution market poses, I chose an inclusive site and participant selection strategy. The goal was to create an as diverse sample as possible. I did however, delimit the study to women with Swedish citizenship. Recruiting women involved in transnational prostitution and/or women who are victims of human trafficking would have entailed an additional set of ethical and practical considerations.

To achieve a diverse sample, I recruited research participants from different sectors through a number of different channels: through social work programs, a sex workers' rights organization, a self-help organization and by directly contacting women through escort sites. At first my intention was to also recruit participants by directly contacting women in street prostitution. Having worked as a social worker on the field I was familiar with the street space. However, treading onto the same ground in the position of researcher proved to be entirely different. I had constructed flyers to hand out with the purpose of being able to get information about the study across without having to impose on women who

might not want to talk. Most of the women who I approached initially assumed that I was a social worker. I informed them that I was there to recruit research participants and either just introduced myself and handed over the flyer or chatted for a bit. Despite the fact that there were no apparent negative reactions to my presence I experienced a sense of discomfort. Approaching women in the street, not with an offer of services but with a request for their stories, seemed to mirror the clients' activity in the street space. They were soliciting for sexual services, I was soliciting for stories. I subsequently decided not to recruit women directly from the street. The women with street prostitution experience in the study are all recruited through social workers or other research participants. All the participants were thus first introduced to the study by either email or by reading an ad about it.

As has been stated, women with experience of prostitution narrate about their experience on a field of power/knowledge relations. Considering the politically charged nature of the field it was important to me, from the initial contact throughout the interviews, to attempt not to position the research participants by an ideologically charged discursive practice. This was important since the aim was to create a discursive space that allows for the multiplicities of prostitution experience. The text in the email as well as the ad specified that the study is about women's experiences of prostitution/sex work and that the aim is to achieve an as wide representation of narrated experience as possible in order to allow for a nuanced and complex understanding of prostitution.<sup>2</sup> I chose to use both the term prostitution and sex work in order to not exclude potential participants. In the text I also introduced myself as a PhD Candidate in Social work and as a former social worker at The Prostitution Unit in Gothenburg. After receiving the initial information about the study, the women who were interested in either finding out more about the study or participating contacted me through email or by phone. They then received more information about the practicalities of the interviews. I also answered questions regarding the study's aim and method.

All together twenty participants were recruited. Seven of the participants were recruited after they had been contacted by email through their escort web sites/ads. Seven were recruited through social work programs directed to people with prostitution experience. Four were recruited through a sex worker rights organization or a self-help organization, and lastly two were recruited by other research participants. The women were between twenty and fifty-seven years

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1

old, with an average age of thirty-three. Fifteen of the women had primarily been involved in indoor prostitution, mainly in the form of internet-based escort services. Five of the women had primarily been involved in street prostitution. A few of the women had experience from more than one prostitution sector and some had experiences from other sectors of the sex industry as well, such as commercial pornography, strip tease, and commercial phone sex. The participants had primarily themselves been in control of their earnings within prostitution, five of the women had had procurers at some point.

I did not only attempt to get a wide representation among the participants in terms of recruitment channels and prostitution sector but also tried to achieve a diverse sample in terms of how long the participants have been involved in prostitution as well as whether they were in the beginning or the end of this involvement. The average age of entering into prostitution was twenty-five. The participants had between four months and fifteen years of prostitution experience, with an average of about five years. Four of the women had just recently started selling sex within the last year at the time of the interview. Nine of the women had exited prostitution. While two of these participants had not completely left the sex industry, the rest of them mentioned no intentions to reenter prostitution.

## **4.2 Narrating stories about experience**

In this section I will write about the interview process and the definition of narrative used in the thesis.

### **Definition of narrative**

Narrative theory does not provide a consensus on the definition of narrative. The question of what is narrative quite contrarily has multiple answers (Riessman, 2008). The term itself carries many meanings and is used in different ways within different disciplines and traditions. Writings on the history of the study of narrative form often begin with Aristotle's study of the Greek tragedy (Riessman, 2008). The tragic narrative is sequenced, it has a classical structure with a beginning, middle and end. There is a plot that orders the events in the narrative and the narrative often has some sort of evaluation that contains a moral message. Scholars within social linguistics often build on this classic view of narrative in their definitions, William Labov's paradigmatical work on narrative analysis of personal experiences being an example (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Event centred narrative analysis, like the Labovian analysis, understands narrative as representation of events and primarily as text and thereby takes little account of

context. Corinne Squire argues that if we consider personal narratives as event centred we tend to neglect important narrative elements, for example: talk that is not about events, the representation itself, and the interaction between the researcher and the research participant (Squire, 2008, p. 41).

The definition of personal narrative that I have chosen includes all sequential and meaningful stories of personal experience that people produce.

Such stories may be an event narrative but may also be more flexible about time and personal experience and defined by theme rather than structure. It moves beyond the past tense first person recounting that interested Labov to include present and future stories about others as well as oneself. It may address generalized states or imaginary events as well as particular events that actually happened (Squire, 2008, p. 42).

An experience centred approach to narrative allows the inclusion of thematic biographical accounts produced when telling the story of a long-term aspect of life, here namely the experience of prostitution. Sequence and meaningfulness are here implicit since the research participant is following a life or theme. This type of approach also allows, as Squire puts it, "*some "non-story" material for instance description and theorizing*" to be included (Squire, 2008, p. 42).

### Narratives as co-constructions

An assumption of the experience-centred perspective is that narratives involve a reconstruction of stories across space and time (Squire, 2008, p. 44). A story will never be told exactly the same way twice, how the story is told depends on time, and the social context in which it is told. As Catherine Riessman puts it, "*stories don't fall from the sky (or emerge from the innermost "self"); they are composed and received in contexts*" (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). The contexts in which stories are composed and received have interactional, historical, discursive and institutional aspects. Contextualizing narratives thus does not only entail taking the wider historical, cultural and social context into account but also entails an exploration of how the immediate social context, that of the research interview, come into play in the storytelling.

As researchers we do not simply listen to narratives but participate in their construction. As Jerome Bruner states "*There is no seeing without looking and no hearing without listening and both looking and listening are shaped by expectancy,*

*stance and intention*” (Bruner, 1986, p. 110). In his classic book, Elliot Mischler (1986) reconceptualises the research interview as a co-construction of meaning and narrative between the researcher and research participant. Understanding narratives as co-constructed entails an awareness of the narrative told being one out of many possible and inevitably affected by the expectancy, stance and intention of the researcher. The researcher is not to be viewed as an objective, disembodied voice but as an embodied subject.

Within feminist research there is a call for a critical reflection on researchers embodied subjectivity and for researchers to make explicit the significant identities that influence interaction with research participants and to be accountable for how personal identity affects the narration of and interpretation of participants’ narratives (Rice, 2009). Merely listing aspects of my identity such as: Swedish, relatively young, white, heterosexual woman, feminist, academic, social worker, with a lower middle class background, without explicating how the participants’ narratives have been shaped by my positionality will not accomplish much. Moreover, positions are not static but rather situational and relational. Identity changes with context, some context enhance certain aspects of ourselves and mute others (McCorkel & Myers, 2003). Research interviewing is based on human interaction. I am critical of the construction of research participant as ‘objects of research’. Overall I have attempted to connect with the research participants on a personal level. I have expressed my genuine interest in them as persons not just as research participants. I feel privileged to have met and talked to all these women. Depending on the person and the encounter between us different aspects of my identity have been enhanced. While some encounters entailed conversations about a shared passion for art, other involved exchanging ideas about writing or sharing experiences of living abroad, et cetera. However, there are aspects of my positionality that I believe matter in a more general way to the co-construction of the narratives. In Chapter One I spoke of how narratives about prostitution and the connection between power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices of prostitution first became a concern of mine. I spoke of how this thesis grows from my desire to create a discursive space in which the complexities and contradictions of prostitution experience can be explored. I asked all the participants how come they chose to participate in the study. All of them, despite their various experiences of, and stands on, prostitution, sympathized with the aim to explore the multiplicities of prostitution experience and allow for a nuanced and complex understanding based on personal narratives. In that sense, most of them positioned me as a collaborator. When I asked how come she chose to participate in the study, Maria said:

Ehm... it was based on how I perceive you, I feel like you're a person who doesn't look down on others. That could hold a value in itself, to be seen and respected. Then I also find your research interesting and I think that it is important that sex workers' voices are heard. I think so because often they aren't. People often talk about, rather than with.

While Maria positioned herself as a sex workers' rights advocate, her reason for participating in the study was not very different from Johanna's, even though she positioned herself as a survivor of prostitution:

A – So you partly tell your story with the hope to make a difference?

J – Yes, and then it's somewhat healing for me to tell it too...

A – What is it that makes it feel healing to tell your story?

J – Partly the telling in itself, but then also to tell and to realize that people don't react the way you thought they would before you started to talk about it.

A – Mm... and the people that will read this, what is it you hope that they will understand or know?

J- I hope that they will get a better understanding of these issues. I can only think of the people that I myself have met, maybe they should have had a little more knowledge about it [prostitution experience].

The extracts above address two reoccurring themes in how the participants positioned me. The themes emerging in these extracts is that I, as a researcher, am positioned as: 1) a collaborator, listening to and documenting the participants' stories, stories that will challenge stereotypical representation of 'the prostitute', and 2) as somebody that can validate the participant as a subject worthy of respect.

When talking to individual participants I was careful to use the terms they themselves used to describe their experience (prostitution, sex work, selling of sexual services et cetera.). Even though I made an effort no to position my research participants by an ideologically charged discursive practice I realize that they, with the pieces of information they had about me and the study, the way I interacted with them, and what I said, positioned themselves in relation to who they believed me to be and the ideas about prostitution they perceived me to have. Telling the research participants about my background as a social worker on the field also allowed them to position me as a person with prior experience of meeting people with prostitution experience. This led to a few participants

positioning me as a source of knowledge, asking me questions in relation to their own experience. Such as: Is it common to...? How do you know when...? What is your experience of...? Others did with this information position me as somebody who needs to be informed about the more positive sides of prostitution, assuming that I, as a social worker, had little experience of hearing stories about positive experiences of prostitution.

### Narrative interviews

The goal in narrative interviewing is to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements (Riessman, 2008). Narrative interviews are of open character with questions encouraging free narration. This type of interview was chosen due to the probability that it would generate extended narration. Riessman argues that, to create possibilities for extended narration in research interviews researchers have to give up control and “*follow participants down their trails*” (Riessman, 2008, p. 24). Starting each interview with the question: If you were to tell me about your experience of prostitution where would you begin that story? I have attempted to give up control and let the research participant herself decide how to narrate her experience. The interviews were structured by the telling of prostitution experience, sequence and meaningfulness were thereby implicit. Even though the interviews were of open character I constructed an interview guide containing general areas of interest.<sup>3</sup> Some participants narrated freely and spontaneously, often covering the areas of interest. Others wanted me to ask them questions to ‘get them started’, in those cases I asked open questions in relation to the areas in the interview guide.

In structuring my interviews I drew on Margareta Hydén’s work on ‘the narrator focused interview’ (Hydén, 2000). The aim with narrator focused interviews is to make possible for the research participant to express herself in an as full and multifaceted story as possible. In doing this Hydén stresses the importance of the researcher’s ability to create a relationship with the research participant. Hydén identifies three main aspects of the interview: the interactive aspect, the polyphone aspect and the repetitive aspect (Hydén, 2000, p. 141). These aspects are all relevant to the study.

The interactive aspect concerns the interaction between the research participant and the researcher (Hydén, 2000, p. 141). Hydén emphasizes the importance of listening. To assume the role of the listener does not imply that the researcher

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2

should remain passive during the interview, rather that she should actively create conditions for the participant to express herself. Hydén argues that to facilitate and support the research participant is of great importance when doing interviews on sensitive topics or ongoing processes. Prostitution is indeed a sensitive topic and, for the majority of my research participants, prostitution was also an ongoing process. Facilitating and supporting could involve: helping with delimitations if the situation becomes too emotionally straining, offering the emotional space for the research participant to tell her story by showing readiness to listen without having an existent story frame to fit her story into, and to, together with the research participant explore different ways of talking about an event and encourage the research participant to extend her reasoning.

The polyphone aspect of the interview concerns the relation between the research participant and the narrative (Hydén, 2000, p. 149). It is possible for the research participant to structure her story in different ways. She can talk from the same position throughout the interview or she could shift positions during the interview. She can compare her current thoughts with thoughts that she has had before. Hydén contends that to listen to a research participant's story is to listen to a chorus of voices. The interview is our chance to discover these different voices. It is therefore important to encourage rich and multifaceted accounts. The interview's polyphone aspect brings awareness to the fact that the story told is one out of many possible stories.

The repetitive aspect concerns the practice of repeated interviews (Hydén, 2000, p.153). The practice of repeated interviews aims to strengthen the bond between the researcher and research participant and to produce a richer material for analysis. In all the cases where it has been possible I have chosen to do repeated interviews with the participants rather than the typical one-shot interview. Fourteen of the participants chose to participate in a second interview. The second interview was used to return to points in the first interview that were deemed as significant, points marked by contradictions, silences, strong or unexpected patterns of emotion et cetera. (Riessman, 2008). The second interview, apart from strengthening the relationship between the researcher and the research participant, also affords an opportunity for both to reflect on the first interview, thereby, I believe, creating a more reflexive data. During the second interview I made sure that the areas of interest were covered, if not I asked further open questions in relation to these areas.

I strived to conduct the interviews in an environment in which the participants would feel comfortable to express themselves. For the purpose of privacy I chose to not do interviews in public spaces, unless the participant preferred to. Most of the interviews were conducted in either workplaces of colleagues that provided spaces where privacy was permissible or in the participants' home.

After I had completed the analysis I contacted the research participants in order for them to have the opportunity to consent to the use of their words in my text and to comment on the analysis. I also offered to meet to discuss the results. This generated four additional encounters and two new interviews. I was unable to get in touch with six of the participants, two had, tragically enough, passed away and four did not respond to my email.

### **4.3 Transcribing narratives**

As researchers we do not have direct access to another person's experience, what we have access to is representations of experience. Meaning is contextual, not fixed and universal. Riessman identifies five different levels of representation of experience: attending to experience, telling about experience, transcribing experience, analyzing experience, and reading experience (Riessman, 1993, p. 9-15). The narrative analysis starts with the telling about experience and ends with the analysis of narratives about experience. Riessman describes transcribing as a process of selection and processing. A transcription is not a simple transferral from speech to text but a process in which a selective representation of the speech is made. The interview is a social event which can hardly be transcribed. Riessman argues that the process of analysis already commences during transcription, when you study a transcription parts of discourses become visible. The interaction between the researcher and the research participant and the co-construction of meaning also becomes visible during transcription. When transcribing the interviews I have included pauses, emphases, nonlexicals, unfinished sentences and emotional expressions such as sighs, laughter and crying, this in an attempt to preserve some of the qualities of the spoken narratives while transforming them to text. The following transcription symbols are used in the extracts:

... – Pause

(...) – Text removed to anonymize or comprise text

( ) – Emotional expressions, sighs, laughter, crying and descriptions of gestures are placed within parenthesis

[ ] – My comments are placed within brackets

! – Exclamation mark indicates animated speech tone  
*aaa* – Italics indicates speaker emphasis

#### **4.4 Translating narratives**

While translating narratives largely has been treated as a technical issue, some scholars doing cross language research have, inspired by translation and interpretation studies, argued that moving across languages has epistemological and methodological consequences that have to be taken into consideration (Temple, 2008, 2006; Venuti, 1995,1998).

Even though narratives are translated to retain the content of the message and the formal features of the original narrative, Bogusia Temple (2008, p. 355) argues that *“a change of language can lead to changes in both how people perceive themselves and how others perceive them.”* Translating narratives thus involves more than merely changing words. When the language used in interviews is other than that of the final text, researchers have a responsibility to reflect on how they are representing people in the translation process.

As I acknowledge narratives as co-constructions and am concerned with issues of representation, it is particularly important to me to address the methodological issues that translating narratives entail. Lawrence Venuti (1995, 1998) argues that the translation of other languages to English entail, what he refers to as, a domestication process. Venuti argues that texts should be ‘foreignized’ by the researcher discussing issues that raised concerns during the translation process. I will thus, following Venuti, address some concerns hoping to, even if only slightly, foreignize my text.

All the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Swedish which was the first language of all but two of the research participants. All the participants were fluent in Swedish. The transcripts were later translated into English. When translating the transcripts I have attempted to stay as close to the language of the research participant as possible and have not altered words for rhetorical effects. When the participants have used idiomatic expressions, I have attempted to find similar expressions in English. Considering that English is my second language, some of the, if not meaning, at least tone, might have gotten lost in translation. However, my main concern is not whether the content of the message of the narratives is retained, but rather how my translation affects how the participants are perceived. I acknowledge that I, through my text, create images of the research

participants (Venuti, 1998). I am not suggesting that this brief discussion in any way solve the issue of the methodological challenge that cross language research entails. However, it does entail that I acknowledge the responsibility for the way that I represent the research participants and their language.

#### **4.5 Ethical considerations**

Before commencing the study it was approved by the Regional Ethical Board in Lund. The principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity have been adhered to. The participants were initially told about the general nature of the study as well as assured of anonymity and confidentiality. They were informed both in writing and orally that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. Informed consent was given by all participants. The transcribed interviews were coded to protect the identity of the participants, names and details that might make the person identifiable were altered.

When doing research on a sensitive topic with a stigmatized population ethical considerations stretch far beyond what is encompassed by this type of standard procedures. In this section I will reflect on ethical considerations in regards to my study. The section is structured by (fictional) letters to three of the research participants. In a class I took as a part of the PhD program, we were encouraged to reflect on the entanglements between research and life. One of our assignments was to write (fictional) letters to a few of our research participants addressing this issue. I have chosen to use a few of these letters as starting points for my reflection on ethical challenges doing research on personal narratives about prostitution experience. As I stated earlier, I see narratives as co-construction between the researcher and research participant. These letters were never intended to be sent to the addressee but are in the text used as tool to illustrate the relational character of narratives.

#### **How do we represent life in research? – the dilemma of representation**

Dear Sonja,

I am still researching that thing I promised to check for you. I will get back to you soon regarding that. You are so far the only person who I have interviewed in their home. You invited me into your personal sphere but yet I felt a distance between us as soon as I turned on the recorder. You are also so far the only person I have interviewed who I had actually met before the time of the interview. Therefore I could register the difference in you when the recorder

went on. Usually you are bubbly and very talkative, you are also a person with a story for most events. I was expecting that to come through in the interview, but it was rather the opposite. I sometimes felt like you were talking to an absent audience, I saw you glancing at the recorder at times, giving me short and well thought through answers. There were a lot of things that you clearly avoided in the interview and it was as if you were struggling to keep yourself in check not to say anything contradictory or open up for questions that would move the story in an unwanted direction. You are a woman of great integrity and I can tell that you are struggling with the stigma surrounding what has come to be your means to support yourself. Maybe it was the thought of your life represented in research that made you stay away from certain topics and to think hard before answering my questions. How can we trust a person to represent our life or aspects of our life in research without making us into less than what we are? And if we are, in research, made into less than what we are, how does that affect us in ‘real life’?

Sonja and I had met once before the interview, this meeting took place when I was still working as a social worker at the Prostitution Unit. Even though our contact prior to the interview had been brief and mostly had regarded practical issues I could still observe a shift between us when the recorder went on. The interview context clearly had an impact on our interaction.

Within experience centred narrative research, the context in which a narrative is produced is taken into account in the process of analysis. Ruthellen Josselson argues that even though narrative researchers have explored what kind of impact the interaction during the interview has on research participants and their narratives, there has been less attention given to how what we *write* affects the lives of those we are writing about. Josselson (1996) argues that the “*permanence of print*” gives additional authority to words, that “*written events gain substantiality above that carried by memory or speech.*” The letter that sprung out of my interviews with Sonja raises the question of: How the research context limits the narration of a life or aspects of a life, but maybe more importantly, the question of how we represent life in research, and how our representations affect the subjects who we write about.

It has been argued that narrative research demands that we pay special attention to participants’ vulnerability and researchers’ interpretive authority (Chase, 1996). When using conventional methods of qualitative analysis individual interviews

are often fragmented with the goal to find patterns across rather than within individual narratives. General themes are presented and brief interview extracts are used to illustrate these themes. Doing narrative research on the contrary implies preserving the coherence and complexity of individual narratives. This allows for 'staying true' to the experiences of the participants the way that they have narrated them but it also raises questions about researchers' interpretative authority.

Marie Hoskins and Jo-Anne Stoltz (2005) address the potential conflict between the sense-making of the participant and the interpretative authority of the researcher and claim that the attempt to perform meaningful analysis raises serious ethical dilemmas. On one hand, 'staying true' to the participant's story, relying mainly on verbatim accounts, risk eluding the depth of meaning in the story. On the other hand, engaging in theoretical analysis, risk violating the participant's sense of self (Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005, p. 98). A genealogical approach to narrative analysis implies moving beyond 'staying true' to participants' stories in order to understand the narration of the stories and its historical, cultural and social context. In moving beyond 'staying true' to a participant's story I agree with Hoskins & Stoltz's claim that the ethical challenge lies in the researcher's ability to: "*hold an analytic perspective, while remaining empathically attuned to the ways participants make sense of their lives*" (Hoskins & Stoltz, 2005, p. 99).

No matter how emphatically attuned one is to participants' sense-making, the potential of representation of lives within research is still limited. To some degree, I share worries with Josselson concerning the dilemma of representation:

I worry intensely about how people will feel about what I write about them. I worry about the intrusiveness of the experience of being writ down, fixed in print, formulated, summed up, encapsulated in language, reduced in some way to what the words contain. Language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation (Josselson, 1996, p. 62)

Writing a person's life or aspects of a person's life is inevitably a violation if what is being written is viewed as or read as containing a whole person. As Josselson contends language can never contain a whole person. What I am trying to understand is the participants' narratives, not the participants themselves, their narratives do not encompass who they are. This is why it is of great importance

to me to make visible and critically discuss the difference between narratives about women (representations in research), women's narratives (representations in the interview setting) and the lived experiences of women.

Some narrative researchers position themselves as 'liberators', 'giving voice' to marginalized people. I disagree with such a position. When talking about research as a means to 'give voice to subjects', or to 'make voices heard' the researchers' interventions and intentions are obscured. The term voice indicates that representations in research really are direct, pure and authentic presentations of subjects. To represent can be suggested to have two potential meanings, either to speak for or to speak about (Madill, 1997). I do not claim to represent the research participants in terms of speaking *for* or attempting to present a 'true' account of their subjectivity or their experiences. The aim of the study is to talk *with* women with prostitution experience but in the end I will also talk *about* these women's accounts. In the end, the study will still be my narrative about their narratives. I think it is important to, as a researcher, claim and acknowledge, rather than mask, one's interpretative authority.

### Difference/commonality and traversing the space between self and other

Dear Nadia

After the interview when we were walking down the stairs from the park you stopped and hesitated a little before asking me if I myself had ever been subjected to sexual abuse. Answering no, I wondered how this would affect the way you perceived me. We had had some intense hours together, you sharing your experiences of sexual abuse, prostitution and resistance. I often feel overwhelmed when I think about how you and the other women I've interviewed shared your stories so generously with me. I feel honoured to be entrusted with your story. During that split second standing there in the stairs I felt afraid that you would find me unworthy of your story. That you would regret telling me what you had told me, that you would look at me as naïve and inexperienced, unfit for the task ahead of me. I tried to answer you honestly without creating an unbridgeable gap between us. Sexual abuse is a part of your lived experience, to me it is not. You looked at me with what I interpreted as disbelief and pain and you asked – "Never?" How could it be that what had been such a frequent experience in your life had never occurred in mine? That which was so normalized to you was so foreign to me. You probably saw my discomfort and moved on to say that it made you glad that there were women who had escaped that experience. I rambled something

about sisterhood, about opening up to be moved by other's stories of lived experience. The truth is of course that I could never fully understand what it entails to have lived through what you have lived through. I hope that you will still find me worthy to share your story.

My letter to Nadia raises questions of difference and commonality, specifically regarding my experience, or lack of experience, of what I am researching. Nadia and I share identities as Swedish, white, women around thirty years of age with lower middle class backgrounds. We are both interested in music and politics, we are both from large families and share the experience of growing up in a small town longing for big city life. There are also experiences that we do not share. Nadia told me about how her early experiences of sexual abuse have impacted her life and her prostitution experience. Even though Nadia and I share the experience of being sexualized and constituted as 'bad girls', I do not share her experiences of either sexual abuse or prostitution, experiences that very much had impacted her life and identity. With starting point in the letter to Nadia I will discuss ethical issues regarding difference/commonality and the potential of traversing the space between self and other.

There is an ongoing debate within feminist research whether and how researchers should do research on groups to which they themselves do not belong (Wilkinson & Kitzinger (eds.), 1997). Some prostitution scholars have themselves sold sex as a part of their field work others have hired women with prostitution experience as research assistants as strategies to overcome issues regarding difference and representation (Chapkis, 1997; Shaver, 2005; Wahab, 2003). Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger (1997) argue that the issues involved in representing others are not simple questions of method susceptible to 'quick fixes'. While some feminists argue that feminist scholars should refrain from doing research on groups to which they do not belong, others argue that the complexity and the multiplicity of group identifications could result in 'communities' composed of single individuals. Moreover, having a common structural position does not in itself guarantee commonality, we have to take into account the ways that we embody, interpret, invest in and resist our (and others') positions (Archer, 2004).

Notions of 'difference' and 'representation' constitute important issues for feminist theory, politics and practice. I have, what Harriet Bradley (1996) terms as, an and/both (rather than an either/or) approach to difference. Differences are then considered to be fluid, shifting and discursive as well as enduring and embodied. As Louise Archer puts it "*The boundaries of difference are*

*constantly re-negotiated and in flux while broad structures of inequality remain consistent and in place. [...] ‘Pure’ (or ‘true’, absolute) difference is obviously an illusion, yet axes of difference are formed within power relations that may have profound lived realities and can sometimes feel, or be lived, like a very real gulf of difference”* (Archer, 2004, p. 461)

The category of ‘the prostitute’ is at once a contested fictitious space and a site of ‘real’ identities and inequalities. Women with prostitution experience are both constructed as ‘different’ and have ‘different’ experiences. Studying prostitution experience therefore implies both deconstructing difference and making visible the effects of constructed difference. If we fail to deconstruct difference we risk reproducing it through our research.

After this discussion on difference/commonality I will now turn to a discussion on the possibility of traversing the space between self and other. Carla Rice discusses *“the possibilities and perils of traversing the space between self and other”* within feminist research (Rice, 2009, p. 245). Discussing the challenges of ethics, power and difference and formulating strategies to the studying of sensitive subjects she is, among other work, drawing on Toni Morrison’s method of ‘imagining becoming the other’. ‘Imagining becoming the other’ involves shifting between different positions imagining others embodied existence (Rice, 2009, p. 261). It combines understanding one’s own position and history with an imagining of the position of the other. Morrison’s method is developed in response to writing about difference in fiction but Rice claims that it can be equally employed in engaging with personal narratives within research. Morrison writes: *“...imagining is not merely looking or looking at; nor is it taking one’s self intact into the other. It is, for the purposes of the work, becoming.”* (as cited in Rice, 2009, p. 245). Rice argues that Morrison’s method of imagining can be used to avoid the pitfalls of approaching differences in research. Pitfalls such as attempting to ‘become the other’, by occupying the other’s vantage point and thereby denying difference. I see selling sex as research strategy to overcome difference as an example of this. In this case researchers attempt to ‘become the other’ and *“cast off their values, investments or implicatedness to fantasize merging with a mythical other”* (Rice, 2009, p. 261). Another pitfall that can be avoided by Morrison’s method is the pitfall of ‘imagining the other’, in which researchers disengage from difference and *“cast their own experiences, perceptions, emotions and selves, intact and untouched, into an emptied-out other”* (Rice, 2009, p. 261).

With Rice's approach to difference the space between self and other is acknowledged, it allows for approaching rather than appropriating others experiences. Such an approach calls for an active engagement with difference, a reflexive practice of 'imagining becoming the other' as well as considering her possible responses to one's imagining. Rice's use of 'imagining becoming the other' resonates with my stance of approaching difference. I interpret 'imagining becoming the other' as entailing: 1) acknowledging both commonalities and differences between me and the participants and 2) emphatic listening involving imagining yourself in the other's position as a mean to traverse the space between self and other. Rice does not only discuss the possibilities of traversing the space between self and other but also the perils. The perils that Rice discusses are related to the risk of projecting one's own fears, desires and beliefs onto the participant. I agree with Rice that even though 'imagining becoming the other' might be a useful method in approaching rather than appropriating others experiences, the dilemmas of power and difference remain.

### Risks and gains participating in research on a sensitive topic

Dear Therese,

How are you doing? I have spent a lot of time thinking about you and how things are at your new job. I know that you're struggling to make a better life for yourself and I keep you in my thoughts. Like I told you when we met, your struggle really inspires me. I'm writing this letter as part of an assignment for a class that I'm taking. It is an assignment about the entanglements between research and life. It just struck me when I was reflecting on how we separate the two that in the interview I did with you, life seemed to be so fully present. Not just through the recounting of your life story in regards to your experience of prostitution but more so through your emotional expressions. In the beginning of the second interview I asked you how you had felt after the last time we met. You told me that talking about your experience in a non-therapeutic setting had raised new questions and also evoked a lot of emotion. You went on to tell me that before coming to see me that day you had felt very anxious and that you had not slept at all the night before, that your heart had been beating so hard and your breath had been so short that you had had to lay on the floor and breath in squares for the longest time. You said that even though you had met me and knew that I was kind and calm and that talking to me felt okay the thought of talking about those experiences, the experiences that you referred to as your darkest secret, made you feel like you were going to have an anxiety attack. Blood pumping through veins and breathing air in and out of lungs

are maybe two of the most basic physical functions of human life. Blood and breath were here entangled with research, very much so. While you were telling me about your night of anxiety I felt a little hesitant about whether it was right of me to go on interviewing you since the earlier interview had put your body in such an uproar. I felt scared that I might have hurt you by encouraging you to tell me about those experiences. When I told you that you had every right to end your participation and that we didn't have to go through with the second interview you firmly told me no, that you wanted to go through with it, that as long as it doesn't get any worse than an anxiety attack that you're able to control and a night of lost sleep it was okay. When I later on asked you how come you had chosen to tell me your story even though it had cost you quite a lot, you said that the cost was nothing compared to the gain, getting to talk and be heard and hopefully having your story heard by others. The specific others that you had in mind being people out there with similar life experiences. You told me that your hope was that your story would affect at least one of their lives the way the incest survivor story that you had read had given you strength, daring you to think that you could change your life.

Prostitution is a sensitive topic. Doing research on personal narratives about prostitution experience often entails listening to stories about shame, vulnerability and sometimes traumatic events. My encounter with Therese and the letter that it produced raises questions about the potential risks and gains of participating in research on a sensitive topic.

Considering the sensitivity of the topic it has been important to me to create a safe and open space in which the participants could feel comfortable to express themselves. For the purpose of privacy I have chosen to never do interviews in public spaces. I have met with participants in spaces where interviews could be conducted in seclusion. The open nature of the interview allowed the participants to choose what and what not to tell me about their prostitution experience, as well as where to begin their story. Following participants down their trail I have avoided asking questions that I thought might be perceived as intrusive or invasive. I have attempted to privilege the participants' sense-making as well as to convey an openness to further exploring experiences. While a few of the participants mainly gave an account of their experiences, others used the space of the interview to explore, understand and frame their prostitution experience.

Melvin Miller (1996) suggests that we ask ourselves what he sees as fundamental questions of whether our research is ethical defensible, questions such as: What value lies in our research? and Do the participants receive any value from participating in the study? Miller speaks of the interview as a dialogical and relational arena in which experiences can be expressed and explored. He contends that the perceived value of participating in his study was expressed by the participants as consisting of the possibility to be heard and understood. Therese expresses that the gain in participating in the study was to be heard, to be listened to as well as the possibility of having her story heard by others. Many of the participants expressed similar ideas.

Some of the participants talked about certain experiences for the first time, in those cases talking about those experiences was clearly coupled with attempting to make sense of them. Interview-based research may allow people to explore themselves, to find meaning and to be understood within the context of a relationship. While narrating experience many of the participants encountered unresolved issues, at times new questions emerged as a result of the exploration of their experiences. A few of the participants chose to continue this exploration in therapy after participating in the interview. By narrating experience, processes are set in motion. In Therese's case these processes evoked strong emotions. Often the interviews involved talking about events and experiences which were charged with a lot of emotion. It has been important for me to provide the emotional space for people to tell their story as well as delimitations when a situation has become too emotionally straining. In a few cases ethical dilemmas have emerged when participants have desired to continue the process of exploration started in the interview setting after the interviews have ended. I have then attempted to refer the participant to therapeutic resources, in a few cases I have functioned as a supportive fellow human for a time after the interview, though making clear that I cannot function as a therapist.

The potential risks and gains of participating in research on sensitive topics are entangled with narrating, exploring and representing experience. I have attempted to create an open and safe space for narrating and exploring experience, yet the interviews have been emotionally challenging for some of the participants. It has then been of great importance to remind them that they have every right to end their participation while remaining sensitive and supportive of their desire to tell their story.

### *Concluding remarks*

In considering the ethical challenges of doing research on personal narratives about prostitution experience, I have reflected on the entanglements between research and life. The central questions being: How does my research affect the lives of the research participants and others? My concern with the productive character of narratives has guided me in both choice of methodology and method. These choices were largely informed by my ethical concerns regarding representing narratives about prostitution experience. In this thesis, methodology and method are thereby intrinsically linked to ethical considerations.

## PART III



## 5. CRITICAL MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF PROSTITUTION DISCOURSE IN SWEDEN

As stated in Chapter Three, viewing prostitution as a *dispositif*, entails not seeing it as transhistorical and acultural but rather as an assemblage of constantly changing forces that respond to the conditions of the present. What can be known and said about prostitution at a certain time is regulated by an inextricable tangle of knowledges, discourses, power relations and practices. Foucault emphasized the productive capacity of discourse, stating that discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1977b, p. 49). Discourses on prostitution shape the regulation of women involved in prostitution and produce them as particular subjects. In this chapter I explore prostitution as a *dispositif* by tracing some critical moments in the history of the construction of prostitution discourse in Sweden. These moments are marked by struggles, discontinuities and emergences of new forms of reasoning, regulation and constitution of prostitution and ‘the prostitute’.

By tracing these moments I do not attempt to reconstruct the past or create a history of prostitution but rather try to distance myself from the discourses of the present by exploring how they were constructed in the past. Genealogy attempts to become a history of the present, this implies that the present of ours is “*inevitably invaded and infused by other times and other spaces whose effects on our present, genealogy is dismantling and interrogating*” (Tamboukou, 2010a, p. 172). Through examining discourses and by mapping the strategies, relations and practices of power in which knowledges were embedded I will trace the history of discourses on prostitution and their power effects in order to reveal something about the power/knowledge of the present in which the research participants of

this study are trying to make sense of their prostitution experience. The purpose of this chapter is thus not so much to understand the past as to understand the present.

In tracing critical moments in the history of the construction of prostitution discourse I employ the terms *descent* and *emergence*, terms that are central to genealogical analysis (Foucault, 1986). Tamboukou describes descent as “*a move backwards revealing numberless beginnings and multiple changes*” (Tamboukou, 2010a, p. 3). This move backwards allows the analyst to trace points of emergence, “*critical spacetime blocks wherein linear discursive lines and practices emerge*” (Tamboukou, 2010a, p. 3). The move backwards is not an attempt to revive or reconstruct the past, and there is no final destination. Rather than trying to capture a historical evolution it is about making visible ‘the messiness’ of historical events:

Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations -or conversely, the complete reversals-the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents (Foucault, 1986, p. 81).

The critical moments I explore are marked by the emergence of: ‘the prostitute’, the emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression, and, the emergence of the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services. I do not claim that these are the only critical moments in the history of the construction of prostitution discourse in Sweden. However, I argue, drawing on the narratives of the research participants, that the chosen critical moments mark the emergences of ‘things that continue to exist and have value’ for the participants.

Foucault understands emergence as ‘produced in a particular state of forces’ (Foucault, 1986). Tamboukou states that one of the tasks of genealogy is to determine what these forces were at a particular time:

*Emergence* is attempting to grasp the very ‘moment of arising’ in Foucault’s words (1986a:83), being aware that this is only an accidental moment, an

episode, and not the ultimate point of a historical evolution. ‘Emergence is thus the entry of forces...’ (ibid.:84), the charting of the battle of forces that resulted in a certain state of affairs (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 40).

Foucault contends: “*Emergence is thus the entry of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to centre stage*” (Foucault, 1986, p. 84). In charting the battles of forces that resulted in the emergence of ‘the prostitute’, the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression, and the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services I have mainly relied on secondary sources, scholarly work on the field of history, ethnology, sociology and law. In section 5.2 and 5.3 I have also drawn directly on government official reports, commission proposals and government bills. Taking the limitations of largely relying on secondary sources into consideration I have attempted to read broadly, deeply and critically, comparing and contrasting different sources. This chapter is the result of one out of many possible ways to explore the shifting dispositif of prostitution. I have taken a particular interest in the emergence of new forms of, not only reasoning, but also regulation and constitution of prostitution and ‘the prostitute’. There is therefore a particular focus on the institutionalization of discourses.

The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, 5.1, I look into the nineteenth century regulation of prostitution and the state of forces that contributed to the emergence of ‘the prostitute’ as a particular subject in medical-scientific discourse. In the second section, 5.2, I discuss feminist interventions in prostitution discourse and the emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression. In the third section, 5.3, I look into current legislation and the emergence of the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services. In the fourth section, 5.4, I present the questions to the present that the exploration of these emergences has generated.

## **5.1 Regulationist discourse on prostitution and the emergence of ‘the prostitute’**

Nineteenth century regulationist discourse on prostitution and the emergence of ‘the prostitute’ is inextricably connected to the development of what Foucault terms bio-power and the medicalization of sexuality. Foucault introduced the concept of bio-power as a means to conceptualize the shift away from the sovereign’s exercise of power over life, i.e. the right to take life, to: “*a power that exerts a positive influence on life that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations*”

(Foucault, 1990, p. 137). Bio-power is concerned with mechanisms and tactics of power focused on life, the life of individual bodies and populations. Foucault (1990) argues that the shift from sovereign power to bio-power led to a growing importance of the action of the norm:

...a power whose task is to take charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms. It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendour; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm (Foucault, 1990, p 144)

Through bio-power and the medicalization of sexuality the sexual conduct of the population was constructed both as an object of analysis and a target of intervention (Foucault, 1990, p. 26). Sex became an issue between the state and the individual, leading both to the disciplines of the body and regulations of the population, as Foucault states, sex became a crucial target, at the juncture of the 'body' and the 'population' (Foucault, 1990, p. 147). Within the realm of bio-power, bio-politics - a web of discourses, special knowledges, surveillances, regulations and medical or psychological examinations emerged.

### Venereal disease and the regulation of female working class sexuality

Foucault argues that the body and sex of the working class was of little concern to the bourgeoisie before the nineteenth century. It had been "*of little importance whether those people [the proletariat] lived or died, since their reproduction was something that took care of itself in any case*" (Foucault, 1990, p. 126). However, increased urbanisation led to conflicts over urban space. Cohabitation, proximity, contamination and epidemics led to working class sexuality becoming the object of bourgeoisie scrutiny.

Historian Yvonne Svanström writes about how prostitution first became a target of biopolitical intervention in Sweden after 1850, when venereal disease was reconstituted from a problem of the agrarian poor to a problem of female immorality (Svanström, 2000). In the first half of the nineteenth century, Stockholm was a stagnating city characterized by a weak economy, immigration was the only factor that prevented population decrease. There was a large surplus of women in the city, which negatively affected both women's marriage possibilities

and chances of finding work. Most of the women who migrated to Stockholm sought employment either in the textile or cigar factories or in the informal sector as maids. In this time of unstable employment and low wages, some of these women also entered into prostitution, as a way to survive (Svanström, 2000).

During the nineteenth century, venereal disease was an increasing public health problem and syphilis was deemed a serious health hazard. Up until the mid-nineteenth century both men and women from the lower classes were seen and treated as potential sources of contagion (Svanström, 2000, p. 113-114). The incidence of venereal diseases kept increasing and in 1830 the Office of the Governor in Stockholm wrote to the Royal Health Commission calling for increased cooperation between the police and the city physician to enforce the control and treatment of suspected disease (Svanström, 2000, p. 136). In the proposal of the Royal Health Commission, venereal disease was gendered. Since there were more men than women infected by venereal diseases, it was concluded that women were the main source of contagion. The committee stated that:

...the Venereal Poison is *chiefly* generated and reproduced by the female sex. [...] it is found that the number of infected of the male sex is four times the number of the infected women, from which follows, after an approximate calculation, that every diseased woman on the whole has forwarded the disease to four people of the male sex. For the hampering of the spread of venereal diseases it is thus primarily urgent to detect in time its possible existence in the female sex (as cited in Svanström, 2000, p. 138)

The large influx of people to the city and particularly unmarried working class women was constructed as causing the spread of venereal disease. The Royal Health commission suggested that there should be mandatory inspections of women working at inns, coffee houses and taverns. Working class women, whether employed or unemployed, risked being identified as 'loose and lecherous women'. These mandatory inspections mark the beginning of Swedish attempts to regulate prostitution. To situate Swedish regulationist attempts in the wider European context I now turn to France where the regulation system was engineered.

### Parent-Duchatelet, the regulation system and 'the prostitute' as different yet the same as other women

Regulation of prostitution was common in nineteenth century Europe. By the 1860s prostitution was regulated in most Western-European metropolitan cities

(Svanström, 2000, p. 6). What was often referred to as the 'French system' had become the model for European regulationist attempts. The French physician Alexandre Parent-Duchatelet has been described as the regulation system's theorist par excellence. This system was outlined in his book, *De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris* (1836) which was one of the earliest empirical studies of prostitution and initiated the modern scientific discourse on prostitution. The regulation of prostitution thus coincided with prostitution being constituted as a field of study, and 'the prostitute' constituted as an object of inquiry. Shannon Bell describes Parent-Duchatelet's study as "*the prototype for most nineteenth century knowledge production of prostitution in Europe*" (Bell, 1994, p. 45). Indeed, *De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris* was the authoritative source for most prostitution scholars until the end of the nineteenth century (Harsin, 1985).

Parent-Duchatelet's study reached most European countries and would also come to influence Swedish regulationist prostitution discourse. *De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris* became available in Sweden in 1843 (Svanström, 2000, p 213). Svanström contends that Parent-Duchatelet's study was well known within the Swedish medical field. It was cited by several Swedish doctors in writings on prostitution and venereal disease (Svanström, 2000, p 213-214).

The object of Parent-Duchatelet's study was to provide a scientific study of prostitution, the data was gathered by observations, interviews with administrative officials and women involved in prostitution, and archival research. From a demographic study of the 3517 prostitutes that were registered in Paris on December 31, 1831 Parent-Duchatelet concluded that prostitution was a transitory occupation and that most women involved in prostitution were working class women (Corbin, 1990).

The study was informed by discourses of public hygiene, public morality and degeneration. Prostitution was constructed as both a necessary evil and as dangerous. 'Prostitutes' were according to Duchatelet "*as inevitable, where men live together in large concentrations, as drains and refuse dumps.*" Prostitution was necessary as it contributed to "*the maintenance of social order and harmony*" (as cited in Corbin, 1990, p. 4). If there was no prostitution 'men with desires' would corrupt and pervert 'respectable women', the wives and daughters of the bourgeoisie. Since prostitution was both necessary and dangerous it had to be tolerated but regulated.

Bell (1994) describes how Parent-Duchatelet, even though he initially stated that 'the prostitute' does not differ somatically from other women, quite contrarily also stated that women involved in prostitution were more prone to labial tumours and abscesses than other women. He also developed a somatic stereotype of 'the prostitute' as a plump, filthy woman with a raucous voice. Apart from stereotyping 'the prostitute' in this way, he described 'the prostitute' as a flighty, easily distracted, easily angered and lazy character, unconcerned with tomorrow. Causes for entering into prostitution were, according to Parent-Duchatelet, both poverty and vanity/desire for luxury. Even though 'the prostitute' was constructed as different from other women she was, simultaneously constructed as the same as other (working class) women, since prostitution was a transitory occupation for most of the women in the study. The need to regulate prostitution was constructed as necessary to govern the boundary between 'the prostitute' and other women:

A good number of former prostitutes reenter the world, they surround us, they come into our homes, our households; we are constantly exposed to the chance of confiding our dearest interests to them, and consequently, we have major reasons to watch this population, and not to abandon it as many people advise; to seek to diminish its vices and its faults and, in this manner, to alleviate, as much as possible, the evil they could do to those with whom they would later find themselves in contact ( as cited in Bell, 1994, p. 49-50).

Since 'the prostitute' was different yet the same as other women she had to be closely monitored and regulated. In order to separate 'the prostitute' from other working class women she had to be identified, classified and controlled.

The strategic bio-political aim of the regulation system was to control the spread of disease among the population. Women involved in prostitution were registered and subjected to medical and police surveillance including regular compulsory medical examinations. If diseased they were detained in a lock hospital. Significantly, in Sweden, despite the frequent connections made between prostitution and venereal disease, the justification for taking action against prostitution was primarily underpinned by moral arguments. It was: "*horrifying to see, how lecherous women, in hoards, in evening and at night roam around the streets of Stockholm*" (Svanström, 2000, p. 235). Prostitution was, within Swedish regulationist discourse, constructed as a permanent and necessary evil, an issue of public health as well as an issue of immorality and public indecency.

Women involved in prostitution were constructed as ‘polluters of men’. Just as in *De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris* the causes for entering into prostitution were understood to be both poverty and vanity/desire for luxury. The acquired taste for luxury was viewed as causing working class women, like factory girls and seamstresses, to go down ‘the slippery slope of prostitution’ (Svanström, 2000, p. 252).

### The professionalization of prostitution and the emergence of ‘the prostitute’ in Swedish regulationist discourse

Foucault theorizes sexuality as a historical construct. In *The history of sexuality* he challenges the repressive hypothesis, that is, the idea that sexuality was repressed from the seventeenth- to the mid twentieth century (Foucault, 1990). The nineteenth century was according to Foucault a period of ‘incitement’ rather than a period of repression. Discourses on sexuality proliferated during this time. Foucault discusses the nineteenth century as characterized by the deployment of sexualities, the attempt to identify and classify diverse forms of human sexuality. The deployment of sexuality produced new subjects, subjects such as ‘the hysterical woman’, ‘the masturbating child’, ‘the Malthusian couple’ and ‘the homosexual’. Linda Mahood (1990) and Shannon Bell (1994) amongst others have argued that even though Foucault himself did not directly examine ‘the prostitute’, the Foucauldian analysis of identification and classification of peripheral sexualities could be extended to the nineteenth century constitution of ‘the prostitute’.

Even though ‘the prostitute’ was not an entirely new subject, the regulationist discourses on prostitution and the surveillance of ‘the prostitute’ produced a new prostitute subject. ‘Whores’, ‘harlots’ and ‘loose women’ were reconstituted as ‘prostitutes’. Judith Walkowitz (1980) argues that the regulationist practice of registering, monitoring and controlling women involved in prostitution was what ultimately came to separate ‘the prostitute’ from other (working class) women, and what brought about professionalized prostitution. She contends that working class women, prior to the regulation and the constitution of ‘the prostitute’ as an object of inquiry, were able to move in and out of prostitution without being categorized and stigmatized as ‘prostitutes’ to the same extent. Police surveillance and harassment under the guise of regulation made it impossible for women to have their name removed once they were registered as ‘prostitutes’ unless they got married or left the district (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 203).

In her study about nineteenth century policing of public women in Stockholm, Svanström (2000) describes the professionalization of prostitution and the emergence of 'the prostitute' in Swedish regulationist discourse. When the first regulation system was established in 1847 women involved in prostitution were still identified as first and foremost 'loose and idle women'. The women who were subjected to regulation were "*loose and idle women with self-inflicted venereal diseases and women working at inns under police protection*" (Svanström, 2000, p. 251). When these women were registered with the prostitution bureau their occupation was registered as well. The women were consequently registered as seamstresses, laundresses, waitresses or whichever their occupation was. The practice of registering women's occupations was however quickly abandoned, by 1848 the women were only registered under their name. Instead of viewing these women as in between jobs, all registered women were consequently considered to be 'permanently loose and lecherous' (Svanström, 2000, p. 251). However, it was not until 1858 that the use of the term 'prostitute' emerged in the prostitution bureau's registers. The current doctor at the lock hospital then started registering the women as *prostituée*. Svanström contends that the use of the French term *prostituée* points to the influence of the French system. During that year, fifty-seven percent of the women who were registered were classified as *prostituée*. The following year the number of women registered as *prostituée* increased to seventy-one percent, by this time the Swedish term *prostituerad* was used (Svanström, 2000, p. 252). 'The prostitute' had emerged in Swedish language.

### Dividing practices – 'private' and 'public women'

The technologies of power of the regulation system were part of the wider biopolitics of the state aiming to control female sexuality, constraining it to its reproductive role and perpetuating its subordination (Tamboukou, 2003a, p. 108). The regulation of prostitution could be seen as effects of the public/private divide and the larger bourgeoisie project of controlling 'the unruly working class sexuality'. During the nineteenth century, women in Stockholm were largely excluded from the public sphere in the sense that they were not permitted to participate in public discourse. However, some women were present in the public space where they worked in coffee houses, waited tables or were involved in prostitution (Svanström, 2000, p. 16). The changing pattern of women's work undermined the patriarchal unit of the family. Controversy over the presence of working women in public space was an integral part of regulationist prostitution discourse. Women's presence in public space was connected to sexuality, 'public women' were constructed as sexually available and as potential 'deviants' or

‘prostitutes’. In 1858, women had gained increased civil rights, unmarried women had the right to apply to become citizens under the law, i.e. their own guardians. In the following year, 1859, the regulation of prostitution was extended and came to include rules and regulations regarding how ‘public women’ were to conduct their living. Svanström argues that the increased control of female sexuality could be seen as an effect of increased civil rights for women (Svanström, 2000, p. 16).

Aside from preventing the spread of venereal disease, the regulation system was largely concerned with limiting the mobility and visibility of ‘public women’. Alain Corbin (1990) states that the first principle of the regulation system was to enclose prostitution, to make it invisible to children and ‘respectable women’. According to the fourth paragraph of the regulation prostitution would be tolerated as long as ‘the public woman’ did not attract attention in public:

A Woman, who is thus noted and registered, is ordered to conduct a quiet and silent living, not to leave the door to the building in which she lives open after certain hours, to not through an open window or otherwise from the building call out to passers-by or in any other way make notice of herself, to show herself by a lit candle in the windows (those should be provided with shutters, jalousies or blinds); to be dressed in a decent way when appearing at public places and not to attract attention through indecent clothes; not to roam about such public places in a group; not to stop without a cause, not to address people or through outcries and gestures try to call attention to herself; not to stay outdoors after eleven o’clock at night during any season of the year; to submit to inspection at set times and to report any signs of disease and to submit to the care of the lock hospital if any such signs of disease are detected (as cited in Svanström, 2000, p. 147)

The extended technologies of power of the regulation system allowed for even closer regulation, surveillance and control of the bodies of ‘public women’ as well as an ordering of these bodies in space. Women present in public space risked, being identified as ‘public women’ and thereby registered and regulated, depending on dress, physical appearance, occupation or behaviour.

Foucault speaks of *dividing practices* as what lies at the heart of technologies of power. Through dividing practices a differentiation is made between the normal and the pathological or, as in the case of prostitution, between the ‘respectable’ and ‘unrespectable’, ‘the private’ and ‘the public woman’ (Foucault, 1975). The dividing practices of the regulation system governed not only those women

registered with the prostitution bureau but *all* women. Any woman could be suspected of ‘lecherous living’. Thus, the symbol of ‘the prostitute’ was used to control all women who challenged established gender roles. For instance, women who were sexually active outside the bonds of marriage, and were not identified and regulated as prostitutes were constructed as a threat. These women did not abide by the rules and regulations for ‘public women’ but did, according to physician Augustus Timoleon Wistrand, “*pursue the same trade under the guise of love tangles*”:

A lecherous woman is nevertheless not exactly the same as an avowed harlot: the latter is a woman who is publically known to offer coitus for compensation. She is beyond the law of common morals and decency; a lecherous woman, however, does not wish to be seen as such, but feigns outer decency and claims still the rights and the protection which a woman is granted. An avowed harlot, on the other hand, is excluded there from and puts herself under a completely different protection namely the police force, and cannot complain over rape or violations of decency (as cited in Svanström, 2000, p. 247)

Through the dividing practices of regulationist discourse ‘prostitutes’ were constructed as different than other women. By breaching the norms of ‘common morals and decency’, they were placed outside the protection of the law, regulated and controlled, stripped of their civil rights and had to depend on the benevolence of the police. The technologies of power of the regulation system were used to shape the boundary between ‘respectable’ and ‘unrespectable’ women. Women were either ‘private’ or ‘public’, ‘wives’ or ‘prostitutes’.

### The repeal movement and its reverse discourse on prostitution

The regulationist discourse on prostitution reflects the fears and anxieties of the time, fears and anxieties connected to social change, class, urbanization, increasing ‘immorality’ and women developing economic and political independence. The bio politics of the regulation system could be seen as part of the deployment of sexuality. Sexuality was deployed through a multitude of discourses: medical and psychiatric discourse that constructed the pathological and the perverse, legal discourse that criminalized or regulated certain sexual acts, social discourse that located sex in the private realm of the family, and religious discourse that identified some practices and desires as sinful (McLaren, 2002, p. 90). Ideas and discourses on sexuality, gender relations and morality were embedded in regulationist discourse. Prostitution was constructed as a necessary evil and ‘the prostitute’ as a symbol of moral depravity. Through the

identification and classification of 'the prostitute' as unrespectable, immoral and depraved a norm of what was considered appropriate female moral and sexual behaviour was established.

There was an almost complete absence of male responsibility for prostitution in regulationist discourse and little if any moral condemnation of men's involvement in prostitution. Women were the concern and the focus of regulation. However, as Foucault argues, there is no power without resistance, and regulationist discourse was soon to be challenged in the reverse discourse of the repeal movement, in which 'the prostitute' was reconstituted from 'a polluter of men' to 'a victim of male pollution.'

The Contagious Diseases Acts were enacted in 1864, 1866 and 1869 in England and Ireland (Carpenter, 2002). The Acts detailed the regulation and compulsory examination of women involved in prostitution. Walkowitz (1980) contends that at the time of the passage of the Acts in England and Ireland there were no significant challenges to their legitimacy. However, it was not long before protests were organized. The Ladies National Association (LNA) was formed in 1869, after the passage of the last revision of the Acts. The LNA manifesto denounced the Acts as a blatant example of class and sex discrimination (Lennartsson, 2001, p. 2). The repeal movement eventually found its way to Sweden. Svanström states that although there was some criticism of the regulation system earlier, it was not until the establishment of the Swedish branch of the British, Continental and General Federation<sup>4</sup> in 1878 that protests were organized (Svanström, 2000, p. 421). There was a close cooperation with the British mother organization, joint conferences were held and British articles were translated and published in the Swedish Federation's journal, *Sedlighetsvännen*.

Ethnologist Rebecca Lennartsson (2007) who has studied the Swedish repeal movement argues that the main objective of the Federation was the repeal of the regulation of prostitution and the uplifting of the sexual morale among the citizens, particularly the male citizens. The Federation attracted both feminists and social puritans. Prostitution was condemned as immoral and depraved and as economical and sexual exploitation of women. This reverse discourse did not challenge the binary construction of 'respectable' and 'unrespectable women' but rather used the same vocabulary and categories as the discourse it was resisting. 'The prostitute' *was* different but she could become the same, she was not to be

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<sup>4</sup> The Federation was formed later and had submerged with The LNA. Josephine Butler was the leader of both organizations.

considered ‘permanently loose and lecherous’. The intention was for ‘unfortunate fallen women’ to be brought back to female dignity and virtue. The repeal movement coincided with the emergence of philanthropy and subsequently social work in the area of prostitution. Magdalene homes or so called ‘rescue homes’, established in the latter half of the nineteenth century, housed women while they were restored to ‘respectability’. In these rescue homes ‘fallen women’ received moral education and were expected to conform to middle class values, such as cleanliness, chastity and domesticity. In order to construct ‘the prostitute’ as a worthy object of charity and compassion, she was described as a victim of male pollution or social injustice.

Lennartsson argues that even though the repeal movement was moralist it had revolutionary potential since it made visible men’s role and responsibility in prostitution (Lennartsson, 2007, p. 264). The Federation was not limited to mobilizing for sexual morality but also challenged the double standard of the regulation system and rallied for women’s rights. The ideas of the Federation gained momentum and both individuals and organizations protested, wrote letters, conducted petitions, held meetings and mobilized. For example, the letter below was written to the Swedish Prostitution Bureau by a group of abolitionist women:

Only the woman is regarded as polluter, despite all men being slaves under prostitution, but only a few women. It is said, all prostituted women have had syphilis. Who is to be blamed for that? Of course it is the man. Within which right can a man access such a woman without providing proof that he has been to the prostitution bureau? Is not the woman’s health and life as valuable as the man’s? Since the woman is judged harder than the man and loses her reputation when she is living lecherously, but not the accomplice, the man, it is a greater crime to stigmatize the woman. (...) Imagine if the police were to strike down on all these men that visit the brothels, that don’t let women walk in peace in the street, if they were to treat them like their equals amongst women. Deprive these men of their freedom after a certain time of the day, set up a prostitution bureau for them, register them with the police, despise them and prohibit them from being amongst honest folks and in public places. Stigmatize them in their youth, as the woman is stigmatized and you don’t believe that these men would sink even deeper than their equals amongst women? (as cited in Lennartsson, 2007, p. 265)

By 1880 the Federation had more than 800 members and had the highest membership of any women's organization in Sweden (Svanström, 2000, p. 422). The same year there was a massive public attack on the organization. A professor of theology at Uppsala University argued that the Federation was fostering indecency rather than fighting it, modest women were not to engage with morally problematic issues like prostitution, particularly not publically. These women's moral integrity was tainted merely by engaging with the subject. Similar critique was expressed in one of the major newspapers, *Aftonbladet*. Svanström states that other newspapers silently condoned the criticism, which implied that there was no publicist support for the organization (Svanström, 2000, p. 423). This attack on the organization eventually led to a decision to set women's rights issues aside. The organization's initial struggle for women's rights issues, such as better job opportunities, better economic circumstances and equal legal citizenship for both women and men, shifted to a focus on moral purity issues. From 1880 to 1881 the number of members dropped by almost fifty percent, in 1891 the Federation only had 196 members.

While the repeal movement gained some momentum and a discourse of prostitution as patriarchal oppression or sex discrimination became part of the public debate, it was contested and to a degree silenced by the medical-scientific discourse of the Swedish Society of Medicine. 'The experts' of the Swedish Society of Medicine claimed intellectual and scientific superiority and dismissed the religious, moral and feminist arguments of the repeal movement's reverse discourse on prostitution as ignorant, emotional and sentimental (Lennartsson, 2007, p. 265). The group that controlled the technologies of power of the regulation system also controlled the discourse.

### The debates over 'the prostitute'

Prostitution and 'the prostitute' were not only objects of inquiry in regulationist discourse. Prostitution was debated and discussed by a number of institutions, organizations and movements. In the labor movement, 'the prostitute' symbolized the ruthless exploitation of the working class. In the evangelical and philanthropist discourse of the rescue movement, she was constructed as a victim of immorality and social injustice and in the first wave feminist discourse of the repeal movement, she was, as discussed, constructed as a symbol of patriarchal oppression and male pollution. Debates over 'the prostitute' were deeply political and formed part of a strategy to establish acceptable and appropriate sexual behaviours and relations (Mahood, 1990, p. 69).

The emergence of 'the prostitute' within medical-scientific regulationist discourse in the nineteenth century does not mark the beginning of the stigmatization of women involved in prostitution. Women involved in prostitution were stigmatized in Judaeo-Christian culture for centuries. As O'Connell Davidson (1998) argues, the incorporation of 'the prostitute' into science did not entail a complete break with earlier representations of women involved in prostitution. O'Connell Davidson uses an excerpt from John Webster's play *The White Devil*, written in 1612, and an excerpt from sexologist William Acton's 1870 study, *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects*, to illustrate the continuities in representations of the 'whore'/'prostitute':

Shall I expound whore to you? Sure I shall; I'll give you their perfect character. They are first, Sweet-meats which rot the eater: in man's nostril Poison'd perfumes. They are coz'ning alchemy... What's a whore? She's like the guilty counterfeit coin. Which whosoe'er first stamps it brings in trouble. All that receive it... They are true material fire of hell (as cited in O'Connell Davidson, 1998, p. 112).

What is a prostitute? ... She is a woman with half the woman gone, and that half containing all that elevates her nature, leaving her a mere instrument of impurity, degraded and fallen she extracts from the sin of others the mean of living, corrupt... a social pest, carrying contamination and foulness to every quarter (as cited in O'Connell Davidson, 1998, p. 112).

The emergence of 'the prostitute' in medical-scientific discourse was not 'the ultimate point of a historical evolution' but rather an entry of new forces. As mentioned before, prior to the regulation system women involved in prostitution were part of the labouring poor, and were not seen as a special class of women but rather drifted in and out of prostitution as they drifted in and out of other forms of work. Through the construction of prostitution as 'a necessary evil' and through the medical-scientific discourse and the technologies of power of the regulation system 'the prostitute' was spoken of, regulated and policed in a new way, she appeared as a particular subject, she also came to occupy a symbolic place in the class and gender hierarchy of the nineteenth century, (Mahood, 1990)

The emergence of 'the prostitute' was, as discussed, closely tied to prostitution becoming a field of study. In studies of prostitution 'the prostitute' became what Foucault terms, *a personage*, she was given a childhood, a past and a case

history (Foucault, 1990, p. 43). The emergence of 'the prostitute' is thus tied to 'knowledge' about 'the prostitute'. In order to 'know' and regulate 'the prostitute' she had to be identified, observed and classified. 'The prostitute' constitutes, since its emergence in medical-scientific discourse, as we shall see, a contested figure which boundaries constantly are redefined.

## **5.2 The discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression leaps from the wings to centre stage**

The regulation of prostitution was abolished in 1919. After the deregulation, women involved in prostitution were monitored by two legislations: the Lex Veneris which dealt with venereal disease and the vagrancy law. According to the vagrancy law, vagrants were: 'persons who loitered from place to place without means of subsistence' and 'persons who did not make an honest living and led a life which was a threat to public safety, order and vice' (Svanström, 2006, p. 144). Women involved in prostitution were encompassed by the latter category. Svanström's study of the official state commissions' reports on vagrancy from 1923 to 1964, led her to claim that when investigating legislation on vagrancy from a gender perspective it is clear that the female vagrant was equated with 'the prostitute' (Svanström, 2006, p. 145). The absolute majority of women detained for vagrancy were detained for prostitution or prostitution-related activities.

The transformation in sexual theory and the sexualization of the female body at the turn of the century, redefined the boundaries of 'the prostitute'. 'The prostitute' was in psychoanalytic and sexological discourse further stereotyped as a pathological sexual figure. During the period when prostitution was regulated by the vagrancy law there was an increased pathologization of women involved in prostitution and the focus shifted from prostitution as an effect of poverty/lust for luxury, to the inherent characteristics of 'the prostitute'. Ideas on prostitution as a matter of social hygiene first appeared in the 1929 vagrancy commission's report (Svanström, 2006, p. 148). In this report it was argued that prostitution should not be treated as vagrancy, but as a matter of its own, since prostitution was connected to the human sex life. In a special consideration by one of the commissioners the idea of sterilization as a way to diminish vagrancy and prostitution was first mentioned. It was argued that women involved in prostitution were 'sexually unreliable and 'imbecile' (Svanström, 2006, p. 148). The children of these women would in turn become psychologically inferior and predestined to crime and prostitution.

Commission reports on vagrancy in 1939 and 1949 included an increased emphasis on the psychopathology of 'the prostitute'. The expert committee no longer consisted of representatives of philanthropic societies or physicians as in earlier commissions but rather psychiatric experts (Svanström, 2006, p. 150). The 1949 report of the fifth commission on vagrancy concluded that the majority of women involved in prostitution were:

...imbecile, or at least feeble-minded or in some other way psychologically abnormal, hysterical et cetera. [Later studies showed that] only a fifth lacked severe psychopathological characteristics. Of the whole material 20% were oligophrenic, somewhat over 50% constitutionally abnormal (infantile, hysterical, emotionally hypoplastic, conatively hypoplastic, suffering from hyperthymic temperaments or dysthymic disorder) while a few percentages were brain damaged and schizophrenic (as cited in Svanström, 2006, p. 153)

It was declared that the psychopathological 'prostitute' needed treatment rather than punishment, and consequently measures against prostitution should be handled by social welfare institutions.

By 1962, the time of the last commission on vagrancy, the vagrancy law was considered obsolete, a remnant from a different society. In this report, the boundaries of 'the prostitute' were redefined once again. This time 'the prostitute' was constructed as antisocial rather than psychopathological. The commission argued that 'sociopath' was a more correct term to use when describing women involved in prostitution since it "*characterized a person who had problems adjusting to society, without necessarily suffering from a mental deficiency*" (as cited in Svanström, 2006, p. 157). In 1964 the vagrancy law was abolished and replaced with legislation on antisocial behaviour.

From the deregulation of prostitution in 1919 until the abolishment of the vagrancy law in 1964, 'the prostitute' was constructed as immoral, then psychopathological and finally as antisocial. Svanström (2006) argues that the point of departure in the commission reports and the government bills remained more or less static despite the shifting meaning ascribed to 'the prostitute', prostitution was specifically understood as an issue of female supply. Consequently the focus was primarily on the inherent characteristic of 'the prostitute' - who is she? and, how should she be regulated?

In the 1950s, liberal women in Parliament attempted to reconstruct prostitution as an issue of male demand. This attempt failed (Svanström, 2006). However, significantly this involved a return to the feminist claim that the women's movement had made against the state as early as in the 1880s, the difference was that this time it was made from within the state apparatus. Feminist attempts to reconstruct prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression were recurrent since the 1880s. However, it was not until the 1970s, that the discourse on prostitution as a form of sex discrimination or patriarchal oppression leapt from the wings to centre stage. In this section I will chart the battle of forces that lead to the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression emerging centre stage in Swedish prostitution discourse/politics/policy and practice.

### Sexual liberalism and neo-regulationist attempts

During the 1960's and 1970's, in Sweden as in other western countries, prostitution changed character to become increasingly organized (SOU 1981:71). Sexual liberalism resulted in more acceptant attitudes towards different sexual expressions and a global sex industry was emerging.

In the 1960s 'the sexual revolution' provided a new language for talking about sex. Terms such as, sexual liberation, repression and inhibition were frequently used in sexual liberalist discourse (Smith, 1990). According to Foucault, 'saying yes to sex' was constructed as 'saying no to power' (Foucault, 1990, p. 157). Sex was constituted as an 'autonomous agency' an 'irreducible urgency' that was to be liberated from repressive power. Sheila Jeffreys (1997) argues that sexologists such as Harry Benjamin, Alex Comfort and William Masters in the 1960s constructed prostitution as 'simply sex', sex that had been repressed. Once again prostitution was constructed as necessary (the prohibition of prostitution was expected to cause an increase in rape, child molestation and adultery) but no longer as an evil (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 39). Within the texts of these sexologists, criticism of prostitution was constructed as moralist, puritan and reactionary. Some sexologist argued that prostitution would decrease as a result of a more sexually liberal society, others argued that 'the sexual revolution' would lead to prostitution becoming more equitably available to those who for different reasons had no access to it before (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 63). Swedish physician Lars Ullerstam belonged to the latter category.

In his book *The Erotic Minorities*, published in 1964, Ullerstam criticized the pathologizing of erotic minorities, such as paedophiles, necrophiles and

scophiles, and was committed to relieving their loneliness and sexual frustration. He claimed that the prohibition of brothels was “*the most foolish decision made in modern time*” (Ullerstam, 1964, p. 122). For Ullerstam, the availability of brothels would diminish sexual frustration, decrease the incidence of venereal disease and the number of children born out of wedlock and eliminate other forms of criminality related to prostitution. Prostitution should be made available to the (male) masses, adolescent boys and people without an income would have the right to substituted services. Ullerstam also suggested that mobile brothels could service “*hospitals, mental hospitals, and institutions, paralyzed housebound patients and old people, as well as individuals who are too inhibited to visit such establishments themselves*” (Ullerstam, 1964, p. 123). The employees would be called ‘erotic Samaritans’ and be composed of ‘cheerful, generous, talented and ethically advanced persons’. Brothels would, according to Ullerstam, first and foremost serve to release the sexual frustration for the handicapped and sexual minorities.

In 1971, the law against pornography was abolished. While this did not lead to the establishment of brothels that Ullerstam had suggested it did result in a rapid increase of porn stores, sex clubs and massage parlours. This growing sex industry did however soon become a matter of debate. Reports of brothels masked as sex clubs, exploitation of under aged girls, drugs and violence led to a discussion regarding the connection between sex clubs, prostitution, procuring and other forms of criminality (Månsson, 1981, p. 22).

In 1972 Liberal Party parliament member Sten Sjöholm proposed the establishment of state controlled brothels. Similar to Ullerstam, Sjöholm argued that through state controlled brothels, prostitution would be regulated and controlled and the criminal aspects of prostitution diminished:

In our bigger cities has the rapidly increasing number of establishments of this kind [massage parlours] created discomfort, sanitary problems and other environmentally non permissible conditions. In response to the situation that has emerged there are two possible paths to take. One is to prohibit establishments of this kind. The other is that society makes sure that these establishments are sanitized and placed under society’s administration and control (Motion 1972:59).

Sjöholm did not view prostitution as inherently problematic, if regulated the negative effects of prostitution could be controlled. He argued that the increase in prostitution should be understood as an effect of more liberal attitudes towards sexuality. Similarly to the regulationists of the nineteenth century Sjöholm contended that prostitution had always existed, that there was no reason to believe that it would cease to exist, that it was both necessary and, if not dangerous, unsanitary and therefore should be regulated. The motion led to a heated debate in which the idea of establishing state controlled brothels was critiqued as unworthy of a social democratic welfare state.

**Socialist and feminist critique of sexual liberalist discourse on prostitution**  
The neo-regulationist attempt of Sjöholm was not well received, the motion was eventually voted against by 298 of 303 members of parliament (Dodillet, 2008). The main argument raised in the parliamentary debate was that prostitution was incompatible with the ideals of a social democratic welfare state.

The Swedish welfare state expanded during the period of rapid post war economic growth during the 1950s and -60s. Universal health care, and child-, housing- and study allowances were introduced, unemployment insurance was extended and pensions reformed. Economic growth and social stability led to raised incomes and higher living standards. The Swedish welfare state was built on principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth and public responsibility for those unable to care for themselves. In Gunnar and Maj-Britt Inghe's influential book *The Unfinished Welfare* published in 1967, social problems like criminality, drug addiction and prostitution were treated as remnants from the past. As the title of the book indicates the authors argue that, as the welfare state grows stronger, social problems and social exclusion will be, if not eradicated, at least substantially decreased. Prostitution was not considered compatible with the ideals of the social democratic welfare state, as it was constituted as an effect of capitalism's commodification of sexuality and human relations. Inghe & Inghe argued that instead of resigning to treating prostitution as a necessary (evil), an action plan to decrease prostitution should be developed (Inghe & Inghe, 1967, p. 213). To strengthen their argument they gave examples of policy interventions from both the Soviet Union and China, where prostitution had successfully been decreased.

The critique towards prostitution raised in the parliamentary debate following Sjöholm's motion consisted of the same type of ideas that Inghe and Inghe had

expressed in *The Unfinished Welfare* and was to a large degree a critique of prostitution as an effect of capitalism (Dodillet, 2008, p. 62-64).

In the women's movement, critique of prostitution as an effect of capitalism was coupled with feminist critique of prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression. The early 1970s were characterized by a strong leftist political movement, socialist organizations, solidarity movements and radical groups came to dominate the political scene. Many women who were part of the new left were critical of the marginalization of women and women's issues and therefore broke off and started women's groups (Lennerhed, 2005). There were close ties between the new left and the women's movement and many women's groups had socialist agendas. Marxist theory was coupled with patriarchy theory and the oppression of women was seen as conditioned by economic factors - women's liberation could not be realized in a capitalist society (Lennerhed, 2005, p. 34).

In the 1960s, the women's movement was rather silent on the issue of prostitution, the attention was primarily on women's right to work and equal pay. However, in the 1970s issues of sexuality were once again the focus of feminist critique. Feminist discourse on prostitution was, like sexual liberalist discourse built on an understanding of power as repressive. While sexual liberalists saw normative hierarchies of sexual expression as repressing sexual freedom, feminists saw female (and male) sexuality as repressed by patriarchal sexual norms. By the mid-1970s the commodification of sexuality, the degradation of women within pornography and increasing prostitution had become hot topics in feminist debate (Persson, 1982, p. 16). Feminist theory started to seriously impact prostitution as a field of study and internationally radical feminist scholars began to theorize prostitution as a form of violence against women and as the absolute embodiment of patriarchal male privilege (Barry, 1979; Millet, 1975). Sexual liberalist discourse was criticized for naturalizing and institutionalizing male sexual imperatives and privilege as the driving force and determinant of sexuality.

Around the same time that Sjöholm motioned the regulation of prostitution through the establishment of state controlled brothels, the social democratic Minister of Justice, Lennart Geijer, appointed a commission to investigate sexual offences (Dodillet, 2008). The report published in 1976, drew on sexual liberalist discourse and entailed a number of controversial proposals such as: a softening of rape charges and lowering the age of consent (SOU 1976:9). Procuring and keeping brothels was to remain criminalized, the commission did however

propose that certain forms of indirect procuring, such as partners living off earnings from prostitution, should be decriminalized and that girls from the age of fourteen should be able to legally enter into prostitution (Dodillet, 2008). The report received severe criticism particularly from the women's movement.

An investigation into the social structure and meaning of certain clubs and bars, appointed by the city of Malmö in 1975, resulted in a report entitled *Svarta Affärer* (Black Businesses), which spoke of the connection between sex clubs, prostitution, procuring and other forms of criminality (Månsson & Larsson, 1976). The report received a lot of media attention after it was published in 1976, especially a section that engaged with the issue of prostitution. The report concluded that prostitution had increased rapidly since the 1960s, and that new arenas for the sex trade in the form of sex clubs and the increased globalization of the sex industry had led to prostitution becoming more organized (Månsson, 1981, p. 29). The debate that followed the publication of the report drew public attention to the issue of prostitution. The changes in the character of prostitution discussed in *Svarta Affärer* as well as the critique raised against the commission investigating sexual offences led to the women's movement's demand of a new official commission *and* a second commission investigating prostitution (Svanström, 2004b). The women's movement was successful in its demands, a prostitution commission was appointed in 1977. The one-woman commission and its expert committee, consisting of sociologists, representatives from the police and government officials from the ministry of social affairs, were to map out prostitution, its scope and causes (Borg et al., 1981).

### The leap – the commission on prostitution and the emergence of the demand side in prostitution discourse

For those who are not involved in it, prostitution is like a drama, the actors perform their play on a stage situated far from the spectator. It is situated at a considerable distance. Everybody knows the ancient roles – the prostitute woman, the man who buys and the procurer who profits from the transaction. As opposed to most other social dramas it is the woman who plays the leading role. The man is there as a shadow, hardly seen. The woman is the one who is targeted by society's disdain. Only glimpses are caught of the man-shadows as they quickly disappear to their different positions in society (Borg et al., 1981, p. 283).

The dispositif of prostitution created, what Tamboukou (2003c) terms, regimes of shadow and darkness, the light had fallen solely on 'the prostitute' rendering the buyer a shadowy figure in the dark. Within and through discourses on prostitution 'the prostitute' was constructed as immoral, psychopathological and antisocial but very little interest was directed at her counterpart. As the quote from the prostitution commission's expert committee report suggests, 'the prostitute' played the leading role in the drama of prostitution'. The commission on prostitution and the reports that were published as a result of it mark the emergence of a discourse of prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression and the emergence of the demand side in prostitution on center stage of Swedish prostitution discourse.

The official report of the prostitution commission was published in 1981, however after a schism based on political differences between the commissioner, Inger Lindquist, and the expert committee, all except one of the experts were terminated from their positions and published their work separately. The expert committee's work was first published in a short version but after demands from the women's movement the work was published in its full extent (Borg et al., 1981). In comparison to the expert committee's ideologically and theoretically induced six hundred page report, the official government report was concise and descriptive rather than analytical. The commissioner contended that prostitution had been predominantly treated as a women's issue and that 'the prostitute' had been the sole object of inquiry in prostitution discourse. This had led to the demand side being obscured:

If prostitution is treated solely as a women's issue and interest is made to focus on the women involved, this is to overlook the fact that the supply of prostitutes depends entirely on demand. In other words, the problem is very much one of the social situation of men, and of men's demands, needs and attitudes. If men were not prepared to pay for the services of prostitutes, there would be no prostitution (SOU 1981:71, p. 136).

It was stated that prostitution should no longer to be considered a women's issue but rather 'a human issue'. Even though the commissioner's report was the official government report it was the experts' report that played the most important role in the construction of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression. Indeed, the experts' report has been described as Swedish prostitution research's key text (Pettersson & Tiby, 2003).

In the experts' report prostitution was constructed as both an effect of capitalism and a form of patriarchal oppression. Rather than speaking of prostitution as a 'human issue' it was spoken of as a gender issue. The report was based on empirical data from the prostitution field, historical and literary sources and was influenced by feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytic theory. With the starting point in the regulation commission's 1910 official report on prostitution, the authors illustrated how the idea of prostitution as equated with female prostitutes underpinned Swedish prostitution discourse and debate over the past seventy years (Borg et al., 1981). After discussing other government reports in which prostitution was addressed and consequently defined, the authors concluded that there was rarely any differentiation between prostitution as a phenomenon and 'the female prostitute'. Definitions consistently failed to mention the buyer. Dominant discourses of prostitution led to 'the female prostitute' being targeted by both regulatory measures and stigmatizing discourses and practices. With the emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression and the light falling on the demand side, the buyer also became an object for scientific inquiry. The report discusses both the motives of the buyer and the relationship between the buyer and 'the prostitute'. Based on interviews with an unspecified number of men, the buyers were divided into two groups: those who maintained more or less stable relationships with women and bought sex to get 'something different', and those who did not have relationships with women and found it difficult to establish relationships with them.

In creating a new definition of prostitution that included both the act of selling and buying, the experts set out to answer the question: What is prostitution? (Borg et al., 1981, p. 42). Heterosexual prostitution was described as the most blatant example of sexualized gender roles, the man is the subject and the woman the object. She exists solely for his sexual pleasure, yet the woman is the one punished for a sexuality that is 'not hers' (Borg et al, 1981, p. 49). With an understanding of prostitution as the most extreme form of patriarchal sexuality, 'the prostitute' was consequently indirectly constituted as 'the victim of patriarchy par excellence'.

Even if the constitution of 'the prostitute' as 'the victim of patriarchy par excellence' contained echoes from first wave feminist discourse and its construct of 'the prostitute' as 'a victim of male pollution' there were differences between first wave feminism's and the commission's constructions of 'the prostitute'. In an extensive discussion of gender roles and sexuality in which the authors

draw on a wide range of sources from sexological and historical work to psychoanalytic theory, they attempted to explore the cultural and historical 'roots' of prostitution. While first wave feminist discourse and practices of the Federation attempted to restore 'the prostitute' to 'respectability' and female dignity the second wave feminist discourse employed in the report questioned norms regarding 'respectable feminine sexuality' and the division of women into 'respectable' and 'unrespectable', 'madonnas' and 'whores':

There are no women who *are* whores. On the other hand, all women and men have images of who the whore is, images that we are both conscious and unconscious of. The meaning that the words whore and prostitution have been given throughout the centuries become prejudices and delusions regarding how "those people are" (Borg et al., 1981, p. 300).

In the experts' report 'the whore' was deconstructed and reduced to an analytical figure. The division between 'respectable' and 'unrespectable' women and 'the whore' and 'the madonna' was discussed as a construct of the repressive power of patriarchy. In order to achieve sexual freedom both men and women had to be liberated from patriarchal sexual norms. Liberation from patriarchal sexual norms would entail liberation from prostitution, 'the dead end street of patriarchal sexuality'.

### Personal narratives about prostitution experience and the new personage of 'the prostitute'

Feminism is the first theory to emerge from those whose interest it affirms. Its method recapitulates as theory the reality it seeks to capture (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 29).

Second wave feminism was concerned with recovering women's experiences of oppression by providing a space in which women could speak openly. The narrating of women's experiences was to lead to the discovery of previously marginalized experiential truths, truths that did not just hold value for the person narrating but for women as a group (Valverde, 2004, p. 67). Feminist theory was, as Catharine MacKinnon suggests in the quote above, seen as emanating from women's 'reality' a 'reality' that was to be uncovered through women's experiences.

In line with this kind of reasoning, the experts of the commission set out to interview women involved in prostitution in order to know something about prostitution, to capture 'the prostitution reality'. While women's experiences of prostitution historically had been subjugated by dominant discourses - women involved in prostitution had not had access to the discourses with which their lives were entangled but had, as Corbin suggests, been "*trapped in the web of fantasies and anxious stereotypes*" of medical, sexological and psychiatric discourse (Corbin, 1995, p. 84). Feminist knowledge on 'the prostitute' and prostitution was to be built on the embodied knowledges of women involved in prostitution.

The emergence of the feminist discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression consequently coincided with the emergence of the use of personal narratives about prostitution experience in Swedish prostitution research. The focus was not, as in earlier research, on 'the prostitute's' inherent characteristics but rather on her experiences. Extracts from the interviews were used to describe what prostitution experience could entail. Under themes such as 'The woman meets the man', 'The game between the sexes', 'The man and the violence' prostitution was analyzed as an effect of patriarchy and constricting gender roles. The extracts from the interviews contained women's narrated experiences of prostitution: coping strategies: violence, drug addiction, relationships with pimps and clients, et cetera. Individual experiences were fit into larger patterns of oppression and patriarchal ideas about 'the prostitute' were challenged. Women's experiences of prostitution were used to understand 'the prostitute's' social and structural position in new terms.

Even though the expert report challenged patriarchal ideas about 'the prostitute' the identity category of 'the prostitute' was in itself not challenged, rather naturalized. The report begins with a personal narrative of prostitution experience. The narrative is based on several interviews with a woman, Gunilla, who was involved in street prostitution in the 1950's and 60's in Stockholm, and could be seen as part of the construction of a new dominant narrative about 'the prostitute'.

Gunilla had exited prostitution by the time she was interviewed. Throughout the interviews she recounted her life story, starting with her abusive childhood foster home:

What I remember most vividly from my childhood is the silence and the fear. This constant fear to do the wrong thing, to not fit in. To do the wrong thing, to be mean, if I wasn't mindful I would turn out like my mother, my biological mother. (...) As an adult I have often wondered why they decided to take a foster child. What did they want with me? My foster mother hadn't the least bit of insight or understanding of a child's needs. I lived with them for eight years, all the important years (Borg et al., 1981, p. 20).

Gunilla understands her entry into prostitution as related to her childhood experiences. When Gunilla was ten years old her foster parents had her placed in a youth institution. A few years later she met a man, Göran. Not that long after he introduced her to prostitution:

January 9<sup>th</sup> 1955 was the first time I turned a trick. In February that year I turned fifteen. After that I was on the strip regularly for ten years, with breaks for reform schools. And then pretty sporadically for another seven years. (...) That spring and summer I was a huge success on the strip. When I got down to Birger Jarlsgatan in the evening the men turned on their heels and walked after me. Maybe it wasn't much to be proud of but back then it meant a lot. My body was all that I had to show for myself. And I was pretty. I made a lot of money and I gave all of it to Göran. I started the afternoon with a bottle of booze to even be able to go up there. As young as I was I soon became a regular in the bars in the city (Borg et al., 1981, p. 25-26).

Gunilla's prostitution experiences were deeply impacted by her relationship to Göran, a relationship described as both exploitative and violent:

He got all the money, every cent. And I was with him for almost ten years! I hated him sometimes, hated him. He beat me up bad, he has marked my body forever – the arms, breasts, stomach, thighs. The police called Ryagården (detention center) and asked them to admit me again for no other reason than if they didn't I would be beaten to death (Borg et al., 1981, p. 25).

Gunilla spoke of the memories of the years that followed as in a daze, everything was blurred together, drugs, violence, criminality, psychiatric examinations and prison. Eventually she met a man and decided to exit prostitution. Gunilla's account of her prostitution experiences is marked by contempt and violence.

If I were to summarize all the years in prostitution with one word, it would be contempt. Prostitution is based on contempt. The Johns despised me, the police despised me, the correctional authorities despised me and the pimps despised me – otherwise they wouldn't have let me walk the street. And I despised myself. The whole world was made up of contempt. The only time I got a little appreciation was when I came back with lots of money. That's the way I see it. Others might see it differently, but that's what it was like for me. It's hard to state an opinion on prostitution when you know so much. But one thing I do know, it's that most girls do really bad. They are the ones that get to pay for it. I really believe that prostitution harms everyone that is involved. At least in the most cases and in the long run. It's so destructive, people don't give each other anything. They just take. I take his money and he takes a part of my body or a moment of my life (Borg et al., 1981, p. 39)

Gunilla's narrative is introduced as painting a picture of what the street prostitution experience could entail for young women (Borg et al., 1981, p. 20). It could also be seen as part of the construction of a new dominant narrative about 'the prostitute'. While the extracts from the rest of the interviews were fragmented and thematized, Gunilla's narrative was introduced in its whole. Through her narrative 'the prostitute' could be said to be given new meaning, a new childhood, past and case history. Gunilla's personal narrative and her experiences of exploitation, abuse and stigmatization, mainly caused by men, mirrors the expert committee's construction of prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression, an effect of 'the loveless patriarchy', Borg et al., 1981, p. 282). Difficult childhood experiences, neglect, sexual abuse, exploitation, drugs and violence became integral parts in the new personage of 'the prostitute'. The boundaries of 'the prostitute' had been redefined again. 'The prostitute' was in the report constructed as different and yet the same as other women. Different, as a result of her life experiences: women become 'prostitutes' because of prior victimization. The same, in terms of her being a woman in a society structured by a particular set of economic and gender relations. The theory of prostitution as not only a form of patriarchal oppression but as the most blatant form of patriarchal sexuality and 'the prostitute' as 'the victim of patriarchy par excellence' universalized experiences of prostitution as inherently oppressive.

### Social policy effects of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression

When the commission's report was presented in parliament it had been preceded by the expert's report (Svanström, 2004a, p. 228). The commissioner did not

propose that prostitution should be criminalized. A criminalization of prostitution was expected to increase the stigma of women involved in prostitution. Moreover prostitution was considered a structural problem, women and men were both, although with different effects, victims of constricting gender roles and the commodification of sexual freedom and social relations:

The relationship between the public woman and the anonymous man is characterized by the conditions of the sex trade. The market like character of the system delimits. It is not the matter of a mutual or emotional connection but about a more or less well masked indifference and to a certain degree a double exploitation. Under the surface lies the antagonism. Both parties rationalize the use of the other from different points of departure. However both structurally and in the most individual cases it is the woman who is most vulnerable and most exploited (Borg et al. p. 579).

The commission called for structural change rather than the criminalization of separate individuals. Prostitution was constructed as a social policy issue. Since prostitution was viewed as incompatible with ideals of individual freedom and equality, it was to be prevented. Prostitution was reconstructed from something necessary, something that always had existed and always would exist to something that could and should be prevented: *“The argument that prostitution has always existed and always will exist as a reason not to act is according to our judgment not viable. Prostitution can be prevented, if not eradicated, within the frame of contemporary society”* (Borg et al., 1981, p. 598). Prostitution should be prevented and ultimately abolished. The preventive methods suggested were: increased public information on prostitution, with the purpose of changing attitudes, the use of tax revenue laws to demand income tax from prostitution as a mean to make women exit, and the changing of the rent law to force landlords to end contracts when apartments were used for the purposes of prostitution and procuring. The commissioner also suggested the establishment of specialist support agencies, prostitution units, targeting women involved in prostitution. The units were to carry out outreach work, offer psychosocial support as well as assistance with education and job-training, housing and financial counseling. The preventive methods and social measures suggested were the technologies of power of the new (prostitution) regime of truth. The government bill that was presented in parliament in May 1982 was in line with the proposals of the commission and was passed with minor changes (Svanström, 2004a, p. 229).

The emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression marked the beginning of modern social work directed towards people with prostitution experience. Specialized support agencies were established in the early 1980's in cities with street prostitution. A few years earlier, in 1977, the city of Malmö had initiated *Malmöprojektet* [The Malmö Project], as a result of the conclusions drawn in the report *Svarta Affärer. Malmöprojektet* was a social work outreach and counseling program combined with sociological research into prostitution. Through the project, the prostitution market in Malmö was mapped out, and the causes to prostitution both on an individual and societal level explored. This was the first social work program of its kind that targeted women involved in prostitution. The goal of the program was to “*help the prostitutes exit the sex trade*” (Borg et al., 1981, p. 622). The project was successful in achieving its goal, through intense outreach work, psychosocial support and financial assistance a large number of women exited prostitution (Larsson, 1983). The new prostitution units that were established were fashioned after the Malmö project and were to prevent prostitution and help women to exit.

Modern social work interventions in prostitution were different from the philanthropic work of the rescue homes, even though both had normalizing functions. ‘The prostitute’ was no longer constructed as a fallen woman that needed to be ‘restored to respectability’, but as a ‘victim of patriarchy’ she was to be helped to exit prostitution. With the establishing of prostitution units, social work practice became a central part of the governing of prostitution and ‘prostitutes’, as social workers became the new ‘experts’ on prostitution. Starting with The Malmö Project, social work in the area of prostitution and prostitution research were closely knitted together. The prostitution units became central agents in the knowledge production on prostitution.

As prostitution was seen as caused by the repressive power of patriarchy the ultimate goal of social measures directed towards women involved in prostitution was to liberate them from prostitution. During the seventies a few women with prostitution experience had started an organization, *Sexualpolitisk front* (The sexual politics front). The goals of the organization were to: fight the stigma of prostitution, change the laws that had a negative impact on women involved in prostitution, support each other, and, to bring awareness to other ‘girls’. They also wanted to stop the recruitment to prostitution, and demanded: women’s right to work, an expansion of child care services, more resources to drug

and alcohol abuse treatment centers, et cetera. (Östergren, 2006, p. 161). The women were however not against prostitution as such, they rather wanted to improve the conditions for women involved in prostitution. *Sexualpolitisk front* was part of the emerging prostitute's rights movement, a movement that sought to challenge stigmatizing ideas about women involved in prostitution by normalizing prostitution as a form of service work. The women of *Sexualpolitisk front* had been influenced by COYOTE (an acronym for Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), the leading prostitutes right's organization in the USA (Östergren, 2006, p. 161). Founded in San Francisco in 1973, COYOTE carried out both national and international campaigns based on three primary claims: First, prostitution is work and should be respected as work. Second, not all prostitution is forced prostitution, rather often prostitution is voluntarily chosen. Third, prostitution is work that people should have the right to choose and that should be respected and protected like work in legitimate service occupations (Jenness, 1990, p. 405). To fight the discrimination, violence and harassment that women involved in prostitution were subjected to *Sexualpolitisk front* appealed to other groups within the women's movement for support. The women organized meetings and wrote articles. Even though many of the feminists and intellectuals that the organization approached initially were willing to cooperate and support the front, they became reluctant after finding out that the organization did not see prostitution as inherently oppressive (Östergren, 2006, p. 161). The prostitution issue was of great symbolical value to the women's movement as the harm of prostitution was perceived as not only inflicted on women involved in prostitution but on women as a class, since its existence was seen as perpetuating and reinforcing women's subservience to men and the definition of women as sexual beings for men. Views like those expressed by the women of *Sexualpolitisk front* became a threat to the construction of women involved in prostitution as 'victims of patriarchy par excellence'. As they did not conform to the ideas of the now dominant discourse, the women of *Sexualpolitisk front* was by some literally reconstructed from 'victims of patriarchy par excellence' to Blackfoot, the strikebreakers of the women's movement (Östergren, 2003, p. 73).

### Prostitution, repressive power and liberation

The discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression emerged on a field of different and contesting discourses. Prostitution was made sense of as a form of patriarchal oppression, an effect of a more sexually liberal society or as an effect of capitalism. The state of forces that allowed for the emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression on center

stage, could be seen as conditioned by the leftist political climate of the time, welfare statism, the idea of prostitution as a social problem and the issue of the negative effects of the growing sex industry coming to public attention. The women's movement was clearly a decisive force in the emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression. It was pressure from the women's movement that initiated the prostitution commission in the first place, it was also the women's movement that demanded that the expert report was published in its full extent. The issue of prostitution was placed high on the agenda of the women's movement. Different organizations came together despite their differences and since there was no counter-movement there was little opposition (Svanström, 2004a, p. 232).

As mentioned before both sexual liberalist and the expert committee's feminist discourse on prostitution involved repressive models of power. While prostitution in sexual liberalist discourse was theorized as 'simply sex', sex repressed by the existence of normative hierarchies of sexual expression, it was in feminist discourse theorized as a gender issue, female (and male) sexuality was theorized as repressed by patriarchal sexuality. Sexual freedom was according to both the sexual liberalist and the feminist discourse, constructed as freedom from repressive norms. While the analytical focus in the sexual liberalist discourse was sex, the sex of prostitution, the analytical focus of the expert committee's feminist discourse was gender, prostitution as a gendered phenomenon. Even though both discourses built on repressive models of power they led to different conclusions when it came to how to achieve freedom from oppression. On the one hand sexual liberalist discourse called for liberation from repressive sexual norms, the normalization of prostitution as 'simply sex' and the institutionalization and regulation of prostitution through state controlled brothels. On the other hand feminist discourse called for liberation from patriarchal sexuality through preventive measures and eventually the abolition of the institution of prostitution. In both sexual liberalist discourse and feminist discourse sexual freedom was constructed negatively, as freedom *from* repressive power.

The leap of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression to centre stage had led to women's narratives becoming central to the production of truth about prostitution; women's experiences of prostitution were fit into larger patterns of oppression, personal narratives of prostitution became political. Drawing on women's narrated experience of prostitution patriarchal constructs of 'the prostitute' as immoral, psychopathological and antisocial were challenged and the 'man shadows' of prostitution emerged out of the

darkness into the light of the centre stage of prostitution discourse. However, with the theorization of prostitution as an effect of repressive power building on a binary model of oppression, the only way to resist the sexual objectification that occurred in prostitution was to exit prostitution and ultimately abolish the institution of prostitution. This theorization left no room for any diversity in women's experiences of prostitution, nor for exploring different ways of resisting oppression *within* the institution of prostitution.

After exploring the emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression I now turn to the third and final section of the chapter and the emergence of the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services.

### **5.3 The sex purchase act and the reframing of prostitution as a criminal justice issue**

By the mid-1980s the feminist understanding of prostitution as a gender issue had achieved a hegemonic position in Sweden (Erikson, 2011, p. 90). There was a strong political representation of women in the political parties and parliament, and feminism had been integrated in state politics. The Swedish gender equality discourse had led to several changes in law such as: The Ministry of Equal Status in 1976, a commission on equal status the same year and the establishing of an Equal Opportunities Ombudsman in 1980 (Svanström, 2004a, p. 225). In parliament there was a consensus regarding the institution of prostitution not belonging in a gender equal society (Erikson, 2011, p. 89). The increased focus on the negative effects of prostitution had led to calls for criminalization. In this section I will explore the reframing of prostitution from a social policy issue to a criminal justice issue and the emergence of the law against purchasing sexual services.

#### **The reframing of prostitution as not only an issue of structural force but also an issue of individual responsibility**

As discussed in the previous section, the prostitution commission had been critical of the idea of combating prostitution by the means of criminalization. Individual choices and behaviours were viewed as conditioned by structural forces. The elimination of prostitution could only be achieved through structural change:

The parties in prostitution are products of more general gender role patterns in society, patterns that are permeated by male domination and sexual constraint of both sexes. It is therefore questionable whether it is right to criminalize prostitution and its parties. To consider involvement in prostitution as a crime is

in the light of our analysis not well-advised. There are too many circumstances in the surrounding society that condition the phenomenon for it to appear right to more or less arbitrarily try to separate one particular behaviour and criminalize it. Some persons, but far from all, would be penalized, while the societal structures – that to a high extent has shaped and affected their behaviour – would not in any corresponding way have been positively affected by criminalization as such (DsS 1980:9 as cited in Erikson, 2011, p. 87).

Political scientist Josefina Erikson (2011) has studied the policy process which resulted in the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services. Erikson argues that one of the fundamental differences between the prostitution commission's social policy framing of the prostitution issue and the criminal justice framing emerging in the 1980s was the issue of whether separate individuals should be held responsible for their involvement in prostitution or not (Erikson, 2011, p. 87).

By the mid-eighties there was a consensus in parliament regarding prostitution being inherently problematic. While there were politicians within the parliamentary parties who insisted on a social policy framing of prostitution and maintained that the issue was best addressed by structural and social change, there was an increasing call for separate individuals being held responsible for their involvement in prostitution. Advocates for criminalization either called for a criminalization of both parties in prostitution or for a criminalization of the client (Erikson, 2011, p. 84). While both those who called for a criminalization of both parties and those who called for a criminalization of the client framed prostitution as inherently problematic and as something that should be abolished there were differences in opinion regarding who should be held responsible for prostitution.

Even though there were politicians who advocated for a criminalization of both parties in prostitution, the majority of the motions regarded a criminalization of the client (Erikson, 2011, p. 84). From the early 1980s until the late 1990s there were forty two parliamentary motions proposing such a criminalization. An absolute majority of the motions, thirty five out of the forty two, were primarily signed by women (Erikson, 2011, p. 136). In these motions the responsibility for prostitution was reconfigured from primarily belonging to society to primarily belonging to the clients of 'prostitutes'. 'The client' was constructed as a perpetrator who should be held responsible and accountable for his involvement in prostitution. Buying sex was constructed as not only an effect of structural

force but also as a matter of individual choice. The idea of individual choice was in these motions only applied in relation to 'the client', 'the prostitute' was still constructed as primarily a victim of structural force (Erikson, 2011, p. 172). As opposed to advocates for the criminalization of both parties in prostitution who argued that 'the client' as well as 'the prostitute' should be held individually responsible, the advocates for the criminalization of the client were critical of a criminalization of 'the prostitute'. With a hierarchal understanding of gender relations and a focus on heterosexual prostitution with female sellers and male buyers, prostitution was discussed as an effect of gendered power structures, creating unequal life chances for men and women. With reference to prostitution research and the personage of 'the prostitute' it was argued that most women involved in prostitution were forced into it by poverty, drug addiction, or other factors that made them vulnerable (Borg et al., 1981; Larsson, 1983; Månsson, 1981). In order to justify state intervention in the form of criminalization 'the prostitute' was thus constructed as 'a victim in need of protection'. 'The client' on the other hand was constructed as 'an ordinary man': married, middle class, middle age, et cetera, (Dodillet, 2008, p. 326). While 'the prostitute' remained primarily a 'victim of structural force' 'the client' was reconstructed as individually responsible for his involvement in prostitution.

### Different arguments employed in the debate

The consensus on prostitution being inherently problematic made certain calls, such as the call for a criminalization of the client, more plausible than others. Calls for a normalization and integration of prostitution as a form of work, based on a different analysis of prostitution, did not fit within the abolitionist discourse which was already institutionalized and was therefore absent from the debate (Erikson, 2011, p. 86, 89, 98). While there was a consensus that prostitution was inherently problematic and should be abolished there were differences in opinion regarding why this was the case, consequently the arguments employed in advocating for a criminalization of prostitution were of different character (Erikson, 2011, p. 139). While some politicians framed prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression of women and viewed it as inherently exploitative, others primarily stressed the negative effects of prostitution in regards to sexual health, unwanted migration and organized crime.

During the 1980s and early 1990s prostitution had been affected both by the spread of HIV/AIDS and by increasing globalization in the form of sex tourism, migration and human trafficking for sexual purposes. In the 1980s there had

been an increase of the number of women from Eastern Europe who were selling sex in Sweden. In comparison with other European countries, Sweden had a relatively small prostitution market. In the debate regarding Sweden's entry into the European Union concerns were raised that the liberal ideas and legislation on prostitution that dominated some of the countries in the EU would come to impact Sweden's prostitution policy. In the anti EU pamphlet *Bordell Europa* (Brothel Europe) these concerns were expressed:

It is not only labor and money that cross borders, but also ideologies, mindsets. The ideology that exists across Europe celebrates prostitution almost as a 'profession' (...) It would be highly dangerous if that mindset reaches here (as cited in Dodillet, 2008, p. 353).

Suggested strategies to combat the threat of the European liberalization and normalization of prostitution differed from not entering into the EU to criminalizing the purchase of sexual services before the entry (Bodström & von Zweibergk, 1994; Backman & Månsson, 1993). Both the spread of HIV/AIDS and transnational prostitution and human trafficking were employed in the debate as reasons to criminalize prostitution (Erikson, 2011, p. 96, 100, 144-145).

The call to criminalize the purchase of sexual services was mostly made by female politicians. Many of these women viewed prostitution as an effect of gendered power structures. However, some of the politicians that Erikson interviewed in her study expressed that they strategically framed prostitution as a more general political issue in order for it to not be (dis)regarded as primarily a women's issue (Erikson, 2011, p. 147). Erikson concludes that even though there was a consensus regarding prostitution being inherently problematic and something that should be abolished, there was a struggle over the meaning of prostitution. The calls to criminalize either both parties or the client were motivated differently. There was no *one* definite framing of why prostitution was problematic, rather many different (Erikson, 2011, p. 118).

### Prostitution as a criminal justice issue

The Social Committee and The Justice Committee have a shared responsibility for issues situated in the borderland between social welfare and law. Since prostitution had been framed and institutionalized as a social problem and a social policy issue it had been considered 'owned' by The Social Committee (Erikson, 2011, p. 127). With the increasing number of motions that explicitly regarded

prostitution as an issue of criminal justice, there was a shift in the perceived ownership of the issue. In the fall of 1992, there were five parliamentary motions regarding the criminalization of prostitution. All the motions were considered by The Justice Committee and one of them also by The Social Committee since it, apart from a plea for the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services, also contained a plea for a new commission on prostitution (Erikson, 2011, p. 126). While the Social Committee opposed the proposal for a new commission on prostitution referring to a mapping of prostitution that had been carried out by the Justice department the year before and the newly established Public Health Institute, The Justice Committee proposed that a commission was appointed. The Justice Committee stated that:

As has previously been made clear, during recent years measures against prostitution have been carried out, actions have been taken on different levels of society. According to the committee it has to be questioned whether the work that has been carried out so far has been enough to stop prostitution. (...) Additional actions should according to the committee be considered. One such action could be to criminalize prostitution (1992/93: JuU15 as cited in Eriksson, 2011, p. 102)

The proposal of the Justice Committee to investigate the potential benefits of criminalizing the purchase of sexual services as a mean to prevent prostitution was made, contrary to standard procedures, without conferring with The Social Committee. The parliament's decision to vote in favour for the Justice Committee's proposal is described by Erikson as a critical moment in the reframing of prostitution as a criminal justice issue (Erikson, 2011, p. 127).

In March 1993 the prostitution commission was appointed, it was to map the prevalence of prostitution, evaluate the actions taken against it and the potential benefits of criminalizing the purchase of sexual services as a mean to prevent prostitution (Erikson, 2011, p. 102-103). About the same time a commission on Violence against women was appointed. Two years later, in 1995, the prostitution commission's report was published. In the report it was proposed that both parties, 'the prostitute' and 'the client', were criminalized (SOU 1995:15). The commissioner stated that:

A penal provision would serve a normative purpose and make it clear that prostitution is not socially accepted. For many clients, the risk of discovery,

police investigations and legal proceedings would be a powerful deterrent. Criminalisation would also have a restraining effect on many of the women. Above all, it would be an effective means of preventing women from entering into prostitution (SOU 1995:15, p. 30).

The proposal to criminalize both parties in prostitution received severe criticism. The same day that the government official report was published two of the experts from the previous prostitution commission, Sven-Axel Månsson and Hanna Olsson, who earlier had been against any form of criminalization of the parties in prostitution wrote a debate article stating that, to criminalize both parties would obscure what prostitution really is about, ‘men’s power’ and ‘men’s sexuality’, the criminalization of the client would on the other hand mark a historical turning point in the regulation of prostitution (Svanström, 2004a, p. 234). Only two of the sixty four referral bodies supported the commission’s proposal.

The government chose to await the final report of the commission on violence against women before drafting the bill in response to the commission’s proposal. The commission on violence against women marked a shift in policy writing on the issue (Erikson, 2011, p. 110). The report was based on feminist research, violence against women was theorized and analyzed from a gendered power perspective. The issue was also placed in an international context by the commissioner highlighting international actions taken in relation to violence against women, like the 1993 UN declaration on the elimination of violence against women and the 1994 UN commission on human rights’ decision to appoint a special rapporteur on violence against women, et cetera. (Erikson, 2011, p. 110). The government bill, *Kvinnofrid* (Violence Against Women Act) was presented in February 1998. The bill contained proposals to counteract violence against women, sexual harassment and prostitution (Prop. 1997/98:55 p. 1). In the bill it was proposed that only the purchase of sexual services should be criminalized. The proposal was based on the report of the Prostitution Commission and on the final report of the Commission on Violence against Women. In the bill the reasons for criminalizing only the client are stated, it is argued that: “*although prostitution as such is not a wanted occurrence in society, it is not reasonable to also criminalize the one who, at least in the most cases, is the weaker party and is used by others who want to satisfy their own sexual urges.*” (Prop. 1997/98:55 p. 104). The motives to the sex purchase act are briefly summarized, it is stated that prostitution causes serious harm both to separate individuals and to society as a whole. Prostitution is, in the bill, related to different kinds of criminality: drug trade, procuring, assaults, et cetera. It is also argued that people involved in

prostitution often are in difficult social situations. Based on this it is stated that it is of great concern for society to combat prostitution (Prop. 1997/98:55 p. 1). Even though the government constructed prostitution as an issue ‘closely related to violence against women’, prostitution was framed as inherently problematic rather than inherently exploitative.

The bill was passed with one hundred eighty one votes in favor of the proposal and ninety two against, sixty three members were absent (Svanström, 2004a, p 241). After the bill was passed by the government there was a heated debate in the media. Critique was raised from a sex work perspective, a perspective that had been absent from the parliamentary debate except from when it had been mentioned in relation to the liberal and normalizing prostitution politics of other European countries. The debaters, Lilian Andersson, one of the former members of Sexualpolitisk front and Petra Östergren, a feminist activist, renounced the idea of prostitution being synonymous with abuse, violence and drugs (Svanström, 2004a, p. 240). They argued that sex workers in Sweden were systematically censured, pathologized and made invisible. The commission on prostitution had not done any empirical investigations into prostitution but rather relied on secondary sources in the form of previous research and information from the social work experts of the prostitution units. Andersson and Östergren argued that Swedish feminists had no right to speak for prostitutes. The supporters of the law were constructed as middle class feminists who consolidated the division of women into ‘whores’ and ‘madonnas’ (Svanström, 2004a, p. 240). Marianne Eriksson and Ina Lindroth, both from The Left Party, criticized Andersson’s and Östergren’s article for lacking an analysis of ‘male society’ and for failing to acknowledge the economic, social and psychological factors shaping sexuality. They argued that research and experiences of other women involved in prostitution did paint a distinctively different picture than the one of Andersson and Östergren.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999 the law against the purchase of sexual services came into force. The Law states that:

A person who obtains casual sexual relations in exchange for payment shall be sentenced—unless the act is punishable under the Swedish Penal Code—for the purchase of sexual services to a fine or imprisonment for at most six months. Attempt to purchase sexual services is punishable under Chapter 23 of the Swedish Penal Code (The act on the Prohibition of the Purchase of Sexual Services 1998:408).

## The contested issue of the effects of the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services

The reconstitution of prostitution as a criminal justice issue did not entail that prostitution was not still regarded as a social problem. According to the government bill, the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services was to be regarded as a complement to social measures to prevent prostitution. The government did however, not direct any funds to social work programs that target and assist people involved in prostitution.<sup>5</sup> The lack of interest in social measures against prostitution received criticism. One purpose of the law was, according to Minister of Justice Laila Freivalds, to declare society's disapproval of prostitution without, for that sake, hinder individual people involved in prostitution to seek assistance and help from society. The fact that the law was not combined with increased social measures directed towards people involved in prostitution did, according to Freivalds, undermine this particular purpose of the law (Dodillet, 2008, p. 425). Lawyers Kai Hamdorf and Claes Lernestedt (1999-2000) argued in an article in *Juridisk Tidskrift* that the law was not primarily aiming at changing the social reality of women involved in prostitution but rather at changing people's attitudes towards prostitution. The prevention of prostitution was in that sense prioritized over the interests of women currently involved in prostitution. The fear was that prostitution would be driven underground and that the situation for women involved in prostitution would get worse. When the law came into force, prostitution did, at first, virtually disappear from the street (Socialstyrelsen, 2007, p. 33). After a brief period it returned but it never reached its former extent. However, the number of women involved in street prostitution had steadily declined since the mid-1980s. This was not unique for Sweden but should rather be seen as an international trend; with new information and communication technology there were new ways to make contact within prostitution (Holmström, 2008, p. 321).

What effects the law actually has had for people involved in prostitution is a contested issue. On one hand, those who are in favor of the law argue that it has helped reduce prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes, that it has had a deterrent effect on clients, and that it has led to a change in societal attitudes towards prostitution (SOU 2010:49a, Ekberg, 2004). On the other hand, those who are against the law argue that these claims are not supported by available facts or research (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011). They moreover claim that the

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<sup>5</sup> The police was awarded a lump sum of ten million SEK for investigative work and The National Board of Health and Welfare was awarded five million SEK to gather knowledge about social measures against prostitution locally, nationally and internationally. (Prop. 1997/98:55, p. 128)

law has had negative effects for people involved in prostitution, effects such as increased stigmatization, and higher levels of vulnerability, particularly for women involved in street prostitution. The debate on the sex purchase act is not limited to Sweden but has received a lot of scholarly and political attention internationally (Danna, 2012; Kulick, 2003, 2005; Munro & Della Giusta, 2008). In their book on Nordic prostitution policy, Charlotta Holmström and May-Len Skilbrei (2013) argue that, considering the fact that the effects of the law has attracted so much attention and is such a contested issue, it is reasonable to conclude that much seems to be at stake in the evaluation of the Swedish sex purchase act. Considering the antagonist character of the prostitution field, many have a vested interest in proving 'the Swedish model' right or wrong.

### The debate on the sex purchase act

As I stated before, the law was founded on the consensus that prostitution is inherently problematic rather than inherently exploitative. However, there is a widespread notion that the sex purchase act was founded on the radical feminist understanding of prostitution as a form of men's violence against women (Dodillet, 2008; Dodillet & Östergren, 2011; Gould, 2001). While radical feminist ideas on prostitution were expressed during the policy process, mostly by the extra-parliamentary women's movement, prostitution was framed as an effect of hierarchal gender relations, not as a form of violence against women (Erikson, 2011, p. 155). The framing of prostitution as a form of violence against women has however gained momentum in Sweden after the law was enacted.

In the debate on the sex purchase act, the law has, both by its advocate and its opponents, been constructed as expressing the idea of prostitution as a form of violence against women (Dodillet, 2008; Dodillet & Östergren, 2011; Ekberg, 2004; Gould, 2001; Hughes, 2000; Scoular, 2004b). Advocates for the law argue that prostitution is a form of violence, that it victimises women and that it should be abolished by reducing demand (Ekberg, 2004; Schyman, Waltman & MacKinnon, 2008). Prostitution is considered not only harmful to women involved in prostitution but to all women, as it perpetuates the idea that women are sex objects that can be bought and used for men's sexual gratification. The reason to why women 'choose' to enter into prostitution is explained as an effect of their choices being constrained and limited by patriarchy, all prostitution is thus placed in the framework of coercion (Ekberg, 2004).

The opponents of the law reject a radical feminist understanding of prostitution, they argue that prostitution is neither a form of violence, nor inherently exploitative and that one has to separate between prostitution involving consenting adults and coerced prostitution (Dodillet, 2008; Dodillet & Östergren, 2011; Gould, 2001; Scoular, 2004b). It is argued that the idea of women involved in prostitution as victims of men's violence against women obscures agency and universalizes certain experiences of prostitution. The law has been criticized for being paternalistic and anti-feminist as it entails a form of control of women's right to their own bodies (Dodillet, 2008; Dodillet & Östergren, 2011; Gould, 2001; Scoular, 2004b).

Lately, critical voices have been raised regarding the debate on the sex purchase act and the construction of its meaning. Jenny Westerstrand (2011) criticizes the debate for individualizing the issue of prostitution, turning it into a matter of agency/lack of agency of individual women and thereby obscuring the analysis of gender, power and social inequality that underpin the law. Ola Florin (2012) asserts that even though it has been argued that the sex purchase act expresses the view that prostitution is a form of violence against women, this has little bearing when one considers the law in itself. Even though the sex purchase act largely has been discussed and enforced in relation to women selling sex to men, the law in itself is gender neutral rather than gender specific. The law does not define the meaning of prostitution, the legal definition of the purchase of sexual services is to obtain a casual sexual relation in exchange for payment (The act on the Prohibition of the Purchase of Sexual Services 1998:408). As discussed before, in the government bill, prostitution was not framed as inherently exploitative/a form of violence against women. The problem with prostitution was rather constructed as related to social vulnerability and problems surrounding prostitution (Prop. 1997/98:55). To purchase sexual services is moreover not considered a crime against an individual but rather a crime against public order (Florin, 2012, p. 272). Being paid for sexual services does not by necessity give a person crime victim status.<sup>6</sup> The sex purchase act is thus neutral regarding the agency of people involved in prostitution. As Florin points out, the act in itself does not foreclose the possibility of different experiences of prostitution, it is rather the dominant discourse about the act that does (Florin, 2012, p. 276).

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<sup>6</sup> The 2008 Skarhed Commission (SOU 2010:49a) concludes that it is the individual crime rather than the type of crime that determines whether or not a person should hold the status of injured party. The crucial aspect is whether the crime in question has been committed against the person and whether she/he has been injured or suffered damages. (Bill 2010/11:77)

Despite the fact that the sex purchase act in itself is neutral regarding the agency of people involved in prostitution, the framing of prostitution as a form of violence against women constructs women involved in prostitution as ‘victims’. In the public debate this radical feminist construction of prostitution has been challenged by sex work discourse. There have been motions to have the law against purchasing sexual services abolished (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011). Moreover, politically influential NGO’s like The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL) and the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) have questioned the understanding of people involved in prostitution as female, victims and oppressed (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011). The sex work discourse employed in the debate is mostly drawing on sexual liberalist ideas in which prostitution is constructed as ‘simply sex’, sex that is repressed by normative hierarchies of sexual expression.

The sex work discourse, as it has been employed in Swedish media, has not destabilized ‘the prostitute’ but rather reconstructed her as ‘sex worker’. This sex work discourse is, just like the repeal movement discourse on prostitution, a reverse discourse in which ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as a counter identity to ‘the prostitute’. While ‘the prostitute’ is constructed as ‘a victim in need of protection’ ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as ‘a strong agent’, while ‘the prostitute’ is constructed as ‘exploited in prostitution’ ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as ‘an empowered worker’, while ‘the prostitute’ is constructed as ‘a disempowered sexual victim’ ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as ‘powerful sexual being’. The identity that is constructed in the dominant discourse is thus rejected by the countering of meaning but there is little transgression or going beyond the meaning that was already established.

### The evaluation of the law

In 2010, approximately ten years after the purchase of sexual services had been prohibited, the report of the first official evaluation of the law was published. The focus of the evaluation was how the provision had worked in practice and what effects the prohibition had had on the prevalence of prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. The starting point for the evaluation was that the purchase of sexual services was to remain criminalized. The evaluation was positive towards the effects of the law, in the report it was concluded that: *“Our assessment shows that the ban on the purchase of sexual services has had the intended effect and is an important instrument in preventing and combating prostitution”* (SOU 2010:49a, p. 40). As soon as the official evaluation was

published, it was criticized on a number of accounts. In the consultation process following the publication of the evaluation, it was severely criticized, particularly by those referral bodies who conduct prostitution research, and those working with health and discrimination issues (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011). The criticism was primarily focused on the evaluation's lack of scientific rigor. Since the starting point was that the purchase of sex was to remain criminalized there was a clear bias. Moreover it was argued that there were methodological problems, inconsistencies and contradictions and that conclusions were drawn without factual backup and at times were of a speculative character (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011). Another criticism that was raised was that the evaluation did not engage with the claimed unintended effects of the law, such as increased stigmatization and stereotyping of women involved in prostitution as victims, weak and exploited and the decrease in clients leading to higher levels of vulnerability and women taking greater risks, accepting lower prices and being less able to demand safer sex practices (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011).

People with prostitution experience, in the evaluation referred to as 'women exploited in prostitution', did not participate in the evaluation to any substantial degree. However, fourteen women did answer a brief survey conducted by email. Seven of the women had exited and seven of them were still involved in prostitution. The women who had exited prostitution were mostly positive towards the law and spoke of it as empowering for women with prostitution experience in the sense that it had shifted the responsibility and the shame from the seller to the buyer. The women who were still involved in prostitution were on the other hand mostly negative towards the law, they made sense of their involvement in prostitution as a 'free choice', and stated that the criminalization had intensified the social stigma of selling sex, that they felt hunted by the police and that they resented being treated as "*incapacitated persons whose actions are tolerated, but whose wishes and choices are not respected*" (SOU 2010:49a). The evaluation responded to this with stating that:

It is clear, and it seems logical, that those who have extricated themselves from prostitution take a positive view of criminalisation, while those who are still exploited in prostitution are critical of the ban. [...] For people who are still being exploited in prostitution, the above negative effects of the ban that they describe must be viewed as positive from the perspective that the purpose of the law is indeed to combat prostitution (SOU 2010:49a, p. 129).

This conclusion is controversial since the reason for criminalizing only ‘the client’ was to not additionally stigmatize an already vulnerable group. The understanding of prostitution as a form of violence against women builds on an understanding of power as repressive building on a binary model of oppression. According to this understanding, the only way to resist the sexual objectification of prostitution is to exit from it. The purpose of criminalising only ‘the client’ was that ‘the prostitute’ should not risk legal penalties but “*have a right to assistance to escape prostitution*” (Ekberg, 2004, p. 1189). The evaluation’s statement illustrate how the framing of prostitution as a form of violence against women leaves little room for ‘the prostitute’ to not want to ‘escape’, for her to talk back and challenge the idea of prostitution as inherently exploitative. The responses that challenged the evaluations view on prostitution as inherently exploitative were disregarded.

### Concluding remarks

The reframing of prostitution as a criminal justice issue and the emergence of the law against purchasing sexual services mark a historical shift in prostitution legislation. Sweden was the first country that made ‘the client’ rather than ‘the prostitute’, the main target for legislative and regulatory measures. With the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services, the feminist struggle to hold clients accountable for their involvement in prostitution had, after almost a century of recurrent attempts, been accomplished. The effects of the law is, as has been discussed, a contested issue. Holmström and Skilbrei assert that, although both those in favor of and those against the sex purchase act argue their case with uttermost conviction, the lack of sound empirical evidence make it impossible to conclude whether the legislation has had its intended effects or not (Holmström & Skilbrei, 2013, p. 128). Even though the law in itself does not frame prostitution as inherently exploitative but rather as inherently problematic, the discourse on the law as expressing the view that prostitution is a form of violence against women has gained momentum after it was enacted. In the prostitution debate, two camps have been established. In this debate the sex purchase act is of great symbolical value. The antagonist character of the debate obscures the complexities and contradictions of prostitution experience and produce stereotypical ideas of ‘the prostitute’/‘the sex worker’. On one hand, the radical feminist camp naturalizes ‘the prostitute’ as victim and ‘the client’ as perpetrator as identity categories. The discourse employed, universalizes certain experiences of prostitution experience and makes narratives about prostitution experience different from that fitting the idea of prostitution as inherently exploitative unintelligible. On the other

hand, the sex work camp employs a liberal feminist reverse discourse in which 'the sex worker' is constructed as a counter identity to 'the prostitute'. While 'the prostitute' is constructed as 'a victim in need of protection' 'the sex worker' is constructed as 'a strong agent', while 'the prostitute' is constructed as 'exploited in prostitution' 'the sex worker' is constructed as 'an empowered worker', while 'the prostitute' is constructed as 'a disempowered sexual victim' 'the sex worker' is constructed as 'powerful sexual being'. Both camps of the prostitution debate thus produce stories of authority that regulate of what can be known and said about prostitution experience.

After having explored the emergence of 'the prostitute' as a particular subject, the emergence of the discourse on prostitution as a form of patriarchal oppression and the emergence of the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services, I now turn to questions to the present that the dispositif has revealed.

#### **5.4 Questions to the present**

As I stated in the beginning of the chapter - what can be known and said about prostitution at a certain time is regulated by an inextricable tangle of knowledges, discourses, power relations and practices. Prostitution does not have an essential meaning. It has never 'just been there'. As have been shown throughout the chapter 'the prostitute' is a contested figure whose boundaries have constantly been redefined, she is a narrative, constructed and told.

In this chapter I have attempted to explore the tangle of prostitution in tracing some critical moments in the history of the construction of prostitution discourse in Sweden. The tracing of critical moments in the construction of discourses on prostitution reveals different ways in which prostitution and 'the prostitute' have been constructed and regulated, it also show how certain themes like 'the prostitute as different yet the same as other women' and 'prostitution as permanent and necessary' reappear although in different forms at different times, within different discourses. The breaks, shifts and emergences that the critical moments mark, are not complete, there are "*overlapping, interaction and echoes*" of what came before (Foucault, 1990, p. 149). In exploring these critical moments I have attempted to show that how prostitution is regulated is closely related to broader social change and historical processes.

As I stated in the beginning, this chapter is not just a historical recapitulation but a history of the present. As Rajchman argues, for Foucault, a history of the

present “*is a history of the portion of the past that we don’t see is still with us*” (as cited in Tamboukou, 2010b, p. 694). What I have attempted to do in this chapter is thus not to create a history of prostitution nor to reconstruct the past, but rather to explore the emergence of things that continue to exist and have value for us in the present, the present in which the research participants are trying to make sense of their prostitution experience. In the coming chapters I will, by engaging with the narratives of the research participants, explore the power/knowledge of the present. The exploration of critical moments in the history of the construction of prostitution discourse, generated questions to this present, questions that will guide me as we enter into the storyworld(s) of the participants. I will explore: *how the present is ‘invaded and infused by other times and other spaces’, how discourses on prostitution as ‘a form of patriarchal oppression’, ‘work’, and ‘repressed sexual expression’ overlap and interact, and how women involved in prostitution are affected by the echoes resounding from discourses on ‘the prostitute’ as an immoral and disreputable subject and an undeserving victim.* I will also explore *how prostitution identity is ascribed, resisted or embraced by the participants.* As have been discussed in the chapter, personal narratives about prostitution were first employed in the construction of prostitution discourse in the 1970s. Through these narratives ‘the prostitute’ was given ‘a voice’ and ‘a personhood’ by which patriarchal constructs of ‘the prostitute’ as immoral, psychopathological and antisocial were challenged. With the claim that the personal was political women were provided a space in which they could speak, what was regarded as their hitherto hidden experiential truths. ‘The prostitute’ as identity category was however not challenged by these practices, rather naturalized through empiricist epistemologies. The truth telling practices of second wave feminism have been criticized as theoretically naïve and politically dangerous, constructing ‘woman’ as a unified humanist subject and thereby obscuring difference. Butler argues that: “*Identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression*” (Butler, 1991, p. 13-14). Even though both the radical feminist discourse on ‘the prostitute’ and the liberal feminist discourse on ‘the sex worker’ are ‘rallying points for a liberatory contestation of oppression’ they lead to a regulation of what can be known and said about prostitution experience. While engaging with the narratives of the research participants, I will therefore attempt to destabilize rather than naturalize the identity category of ‘the prostitute’. To destabilize an identity category does however, with the words of Scott: “*not mean that one dismisses the effects of such concepts and identities, nor that*

*one does not explain behavior in terms of their operations”* (Scott, 1991, p. 792). By not viewing power as repressive but rather as productive I will explore how the research participants have been produced as particular subjects of their experience. I will explore the diversity in women’s experiences of prostitution and different ways of resisting oppression within the institution of prostitution as well as resistance by exiting prostitution.

## **PART IV**



## 6. INTRODUCTIONS

The storyworld we are about to enter entails the narratives of twenty women. Stories told during hours and hours of conversation and transcribed and transformed into hundreds and hundreds of pages of text.

When I first started engaging with the narratives I thought it might be a good idea to create an overview of the participants' experiences and backgrounds. This was partly a result of being overwhelmed by the sheer volume and the unruliness of the material and partly an attempt to give my supervisors an idea of who the research participants were. Not knowing where to start, I began to write down similarities and differences in experiences and backgrounds – similarities and differences in class background, ethnicity, age, educational qualifications, prostitution arena, age when entering into prostitution, experiences of abuse, procuring and drug use, et cetera. Even though the text could be seen as serving its purpose of creating an overview, containing factors that are usually included when studying prostitution experience, it bothered me profoundly. Reading the text, it seemed as though the faces and the voices of the women disappeared. In no way did the text capture who the participants were and was therefore useless as a means of introduction.

In the following text I will, drawing on the work of feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero, explore the reason behind my feeling of discomfort and map out a different approach to introducing the participants.

### 6.1 'What' and 'who' one is and the problem of introduction

In the introduction to Adriana Cavarero's *Relating Narratives – storytelling and selfhood*, Paul Kottman quotes a phrase from Shakespeare's Romeo: "By a name. I know not how to tell thee who I am" (Cavarero, 2000, p. vii). He goes on to

state that Romeo's problem is a problem of 'introduction', a problem of how to introduce himself, to make himself known to Juliet, and how to do this without using his father's name, the name he has been given. His desire is to be recognized for *who* he is beyond his name. Romeo's problem of introduction is used as a metaphor for Cavarero's concern with the difference between *what* and *who* one is. This difference is in Cavarero's text established as the difference between philosophy and narration.

Cavarero claims, with her point of departure in Hannah Arendt's work, that philosophy is concerned with defining or determining Man by establishing *what* Man is. 'The discursive register of philosophy' has the form of a definite knowledge, a knowledge which regards the universality of Man (Cavarero, 2000, p. 13). Arendt contends that "*the moment we want to say who someone is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying what he is*" (as cited in Cavarero, 2000, p. vii). In other words, philosophical discourse is unable to express in words, the individual uniqueness of a human being. This was the problem I encountered when attempting to create an overview of the participants' backgrounds and experiences. The text was useless as a means to introduce the participants to my supervisors. The women who had spent hours and hours narrating their lives to me were reduced to the 'names' that they had been given: 'woman', 'academic', 'drug addict', 'victim of sexual abuse', 'middle class', 'working class', et cetera. My desire for them to be known beyond these 'names', and the discrepancy between that desire and the text caused an intense feeling of discomfort.

So how do you introduce a person without reducing that person to 'what' s/he is? Arendt's point is not that 'who' one is is inexpressible in language but rather that 'who' one is "*is revealed and made manifest through that persons actions and speech*" (Cavarero, 2000, p. viii). Who one is can be known through the narration of the life story of that individual. The connection between narration and who one is constitutes an important starting point for Cavarero, and for my study.

Philosophy's failure to express someone's unique individuality as a person is moreover, in both Arendt's and Cavarero's work, connected to politics. Traditional philosophy and politics responds to universals rather than to unique persons and their interactions. Politics thinks on a grand scale: through universal concepts, general categories, collective identities, specific cultures, communities, memberships, and groups (Cavarero, 2002, p. 98). Kottman states that "*the link between narration and the revelation of who someone is through that narration*

offer for Arendt and for Cavarero, a new sense of politics, an alternative way of understanding human interaction as the interaction of unique existents” (Cavarero, 2000, p. ix). Kottman contends that narration refocuses the political:

... whereas political discourse functions politically only through the question of *what* men and women are – their qualities, or qualifications as individuals, citizens and so forth – narration reveals, in a way that totally refocuses the political, *who* someone actually is. Narration, writes Cavarero, is ‘the verbal response’ to this ‘who’ – a response which remarkably, can take on the meaning of a political action (Cavarero, 2000, p. x).

I like to think of the research participant’s narration of their prostitution experience as political actions of this kind. Political actions that refocuses from *what* one is: ‘prostitute’, ‘woman’, ‘middle class’, ‘victimized’, et cetera, to *who* one is in one’s unique existence, an existence which always exceeds any ‘what’ (Cavarero, 2000, p. xx).

I claim that the refocusing from the ‘what’ to the ‘who’ is particularly important in research on women involved in prostitution. As discussed in the previous chapter ‘the prostitute’ emerged as an identity category in regulationist discourse. Through the technologies of power of bio-politics women involved in prostitution became what Leonore Kuo terms “*mere paradigm and metaphor; she ceased to be a person and became a disembodied stereotype*” (Kuo, 2002, p. 61). Kuo argues that considering that living, embodied women involved in prostitution continue to be reduced to mere paradigms and metaphors, to ‘prostitutes’, feminist engaging with the prostitution issue must either alter the prostitute construct radically or eradicate it altogether (Kuo, 2002, p. 61). By refocusing from the ‘what’ to the ‘who’ I will attempt to challenge the prostitute construct.

## **6.2 Who we are – a unique being rather than an inner essence**

Who one is, is with Cavarero not to be understood as an essence or an inner, deep, hidden substance (Cavarero, 2002, p. 95). In *Relating narratives* Cavarero (2000) introduces the idea of the *narratable self*. The narratable self emerges with the desire to be heard and for one’s story to be told by somebody else, a desire frequently expressed by the research participants. The narratable self has nothing to do with the universal subject of the dominant philosophical discourse. It is not fixed but rather ‘unique and unrepeatable’, it takes up subject positions as points of departure for the narration rather than in a permanent way (Tamboukou, 2008b, p. 288).

One who is born, lives and dies undoubtedly transits through many identities, more often changes his/her being what he/she is, and most often is probably so many things put together at the same time. Nevertheless, from beginning to end, he or she remains who he or she is: a unique being that has a face, a name, a story (Cavarero, 2002, p. 96)

With the narratable self Cavarero develops a notion of selfhood that is essentially relational. Cavarero argues that, in the narrative relations, between self and other, the desire for an answer to the question “Who am I?” relationally and contingently generates identity (Curtis, 2002, p. 852). As Guaraldo argues, Cavarero understands identity in the form of a story as: “*the outcome of a relational practice – between the I and the you – not [as] an essential feature of each singularity*” (Guaraldo, 2012, p. 98). The self is dependent upon the other to tell her/his story and have her/his story told back to her/him, the exposure and vulnerability that this dependency entails are used as starting points for the relational self (Guaraldo, 2012, p. 98).

Cavarero’s philosophy of narration can be read as a critique of identity politics in which identities are congealed into an essence, a general (wounded) name, a politics that according to Cavarero sacrifices the uniqueness of every being (‘who’ people are) to the collective identities that are common to many (‘what’ people are) (Guaraldo, 2012, p. 98; Curtis, 2002). But also as a critique of postmodernist subjectivity – multiple, fragmented and without a centre. Cavarero argues that both camps fail to address the question of who a person is. While identity politics ask, for example, what Woman is, postmodernists ask: “*how many different things constitute the centreless subjectivity that follows the collapse of the subject?*” (Cavarero, 2002, p. 91). No list of identities, no matter how long, can answer the question of who a person is. Cavarero argues that who one is consists in the embodied uniqueness that, “*here and now appears to me as I look at you*” (Cavarero, 2002, p. 93).

Cavarero has been criticized for lacking a power perspective by not addressing enough the entanglement between the ‘who’ and the ‘what’, i.e. how our ‘who’ is entangled with our ‘whats’ in the form of group affinities, identifications and histories (Curtis, 2002, p. 854). The critique is misguided in the sense that Cavarero does not deny the importance of identity categories in order to understand human identity. She states:

The confusion between the uniqueness of personal identity and common identities – further aggravated by the dissolution of the first into the second – in fact forces me to point out the obvious. The *who* is never without the *what*. Indeed, the who is not an originating substance, a pure reality, to which is added, in the course of life, the variable multiplicity of the what (Cavarero, 2002, p. 100).

According to Cavarero, the ‘who’ is never without the ‘what’ but it always exceeds it. Moreover, to be in a position of vulnerability necessitates that my own self-understanding is never completely mine, my ‘who’, the answer to the question of who I am, is also given to me from the other, from outside. This entails an ontological vulnerability to others acts and stories about ourselves.

### **6.3 Introduced through stories**

There is no *one* single story that could possibly encompass the whole of our lived experiences, we are all composed of many stories and stories are fluid and shifting. The narratable self, not fully distinguishable from her/his story, is nevertheless not reducible to the content of her/his story. In this thesis, the participants’ stories about themselves are thematic, biographical accounts produced when telling stories about prostitution experience. These stories do not capture or contain all the biographical facts about the participants’ lives but are still capable of introducing the participants as unique existences. Cavarero argues that it is not the content of the story that makes us desire our stories to be told but rather the idea that the story expresses our individual uniqueness.

The multiplicities of prostitution experience exist both between and within the participants’ narratives. Even though I am not doing biographical work, I will attempt to follow the participants’ narratives as their stories unfold throughout the subsequent chapters. As this study is built on and structured by narratives, the research participants will be introduced to you as their stories appear in the text. I will however briefly introduce their ‘whats’ to you now, my hope is nevertheless that you will know them beyond their ‘names’ as we engage with their narratives.

#### **Brief introductions**

*Elena* is in her mid-twenties. We got in touch through an ex-colleague at one of the prostitution units. Elena comes from a middle class background and lives in a small town on the west coast. Elena was on parental leave when we met

and had plans on going back to school to study for a university degree. She first entered into prostitution when she was fourteen years old and exited when she was twenty-three. While involved in prostitution, she had experience of both escort and massage parlor prostitution.

*Nadia* is in her late twenties, we got in touch through another participant. Nadia lived in a big city and when we met she was working part time with a creative profession while she was on sickness benefits. Nadia comes from a middle class background. She first sold sex when she was seventeen and later on got involved in street prostitution. When we met she had exited prostitution a year previously.

*Therese* is in her mid-thirties, we got in touch through her case manager at the Prostitution Unit. Therese comes from a working class background and grew up in a small town in the south. She moved to a bigger city when she was in her early twenties. She entered into escort prostitution when she was thirty-one. She had been on sickness benefits since she had exited two years previous to when we met. By the time of our interviews she was just about to return to the regular job market.

*Sonja* is in her late fifties. We first got in touch when I was working as a social worker at the Prostitution Unit. When we met for our first interview, it had been about eight years since Sonja first entered into prostitution. She was working full time as an independent escort and was relying on her income from prostitution to support herself. Sonja comes from a working class background. She is divorced and her children are grown.

*Maria* is in her mid-thirties, she comes from an upper middle class background and lives in a big city. We first met at a conference she was attending as a representative for a sex workers' rights organisation. She has two academic degrees and was at the time of our interviews working full time at a regular job. She was also selling sex as an escort. She first entered into prostitution when she was in her early thirties.

*Camilla* and I got in touch through her mid wife. Camilla is in her early forties and on sickness benefits. She lives in a big city. She comes from a working class background and entered into prostitution in her early twenties, just after her son was born. Sixteen years had passed since she exited prostitution at the time of our interviews.

*Yulia* and I got in touch through her former contact at the Prostitution Unit. Yulia is in her mid-thirties and works at an NGO. She has an MA in economics and when we met, five years had passed since she exited prostitution. Yulia is originally from Russia where she was raised in an upper middle class home. She migrated to Sweden when she was in her early twenties. She first entered into hotel prostitution when she was sixteen. In Sweden she had been involved in both street prostitution and escort prostitution.

*Johanna* is in her mid-twenties. We got in touch through a self-help organisation for people with experience of the sex industry. She is the mother of two and was at the time of our interview working full time at a regular job. She is from a middle class background and lives in a small city on the east coast. She first entered into prostitution when she was fourteen years old and exited four years later. She had mostly gotten in touch with clients through the internet.

*Emma* is in her mid-forties. We got in touch through a sex workers' rights organization. Emma had experience of pornography, striptease and working in a brothel. Even though she no longer was working in the sex-industry she was an active advocate for sex worker's rights. Emma lives in a big city, she comes from a middle class background and was working a few different jobs when we met.

*Eva* is in her late fifties, we got in touch through her escort ad. Eva entered into prostitution when she was forty-nine. At the time of our interviews she was working part time with her own business and part time selling sex as an escort. Eva comes from a middle class background. She is separated and her children are grown and have moved out.

*Alicia* and I got in touch through a sex workers' rights organization. She is in her mid-twenties and the mother of two. She entered into prostitution when she was twenty-four. By the time we met for our second interview she had started to work as a stripper. Alicia lives in a small city, she comes from a working class background and at the time of our interviews she was studying to improve her grades so that she could continue on with university studies.

*Jenna* is in her early twenties. We get in touch through her escort ad. Jenna comes from a working class background. When she was eighteen she moved to a big city to work as a stripper. When we met a few years had passed since she had entered into prostitution, she was working full time as an escort and taking distance learning classes.

*Rebecca* is in her late forties. She is from a middle class background and lives in a small city in the north. By the time of our interviews she was on sickness benefits and was working part time at a regular job. We got in touch through her escort ad. She had entered into prostitution that same year after having worked as a phone sex provider for a few years.

*Maya* is in her early twenties. I contacted her through her escort ad. Maya had entered into prostitution just a couple of months earlier. She is from a middle class background and was planning on going back to school to get a university degree. By the time that we met she was relying on escorting to support herself.

*Selma* is in her early twenties. We got in touch through her escort ad. Selma had entered into prostitution when she was nineteen. She is from a middle class background and lives in a big city. She had just completed a training program and was by the time for our interviews looking for work within the field of her studies. She was relying on her escorting to support herself.

*Sara* and I got in touch through her escort ad. Sara is in her mid-twenties. She lives in a small town in the south and comes from a middle class background. She had entered into prostitution when she was twenty-two. She was planning on going back to school and cutting down on escorting but was working full time as an escort when we met.

*Lisa* and I got in touch through her escort ad. Lisa is in her early twenties, she comes from a working class background. At the time of our interviews she was working part time at a regular job. She had just moved to live with her boyfriend in a small town in the north and did not at the time sell sex. She had, however, intentions of selling sex again when the circumstances were different. She had first entered into prostitution when she was nineteen and had worked as an escort.

*Betty* is in her mid-fifties. We got in touch through her therapist. Betty entered into street prostitution when she was forty-four and exited a couple of years before we met. She is from a working class background, she lives in a big city and was at the time of our interviews studying full time.

*Lydia* is in her mid-forties. We got in touch through her case manager at the Prostitution Unit. Lydia moved to Europe from Brazil when she was in her early twenties. After she got divorced when she was in her early thirties she entered

into street prostitution. Lydia is from a middle class background. When we met she was on a disability pension and was selling sex from the street.

*Veronika* is in her late fifties. We got in touch through another participant. Veronika entered into street prostitution when she was forty and was still relying on prostitution to support herself even though she was also on a disability pension by the time we met. Veronika is from a middle class background and lives in a big city.



## 7. BEGINNING STORIES

The term storyworld, as theorized by David Herman (2002), points to the ‘world-creating’ power of narratives. Narratives have the power to move people from the space-time of face-to-face interaction or the reading of a text, to the space-time of the world narrated about. Criticizing the structuralist notion of story Herman argues that “*Interpreters of narrative do not merely reconstruct a sequence of events and a set of existents but imaginatively (emotionally, viscerally) inhabit a world in which, besides happening and existing, things matter, agitate, exalt, repulse, provide grounds for laughter and grief, and so on – both for narrative participants and for interpreters of the story*” (Herman, 2002, p. 16). Moreover, the term storyworld relays the idea that stories do not only involve sequences of events but the spatio-temporally structured context (world) in which the events are embedded (Herman, 2002, p. 14). In order to interpret a narrative one must understand something about the world in which the narrated events and experiences take place. By entering into the storyworld we imaginatively enter into the space-time of the participants’ stories. Through these stories we may know something about the context in which they are set.

The entry point into the storyworld is the numberless beginnings of prostitution experience, the way they have been narrated to me by the women I have interviewed. Entering prostitution has been theorized and analyzed in a number of ways: as a drifting, as a strategy, or as an event (Hedin & Månsson, 2003, p. 226; O’Neill, 2001, p. 78; Pateman, 2007 p. 63). There are numerous studies about risk factors, predictors and determinants related to the entry into prostitution. My focus of interest is however how women themselves, through their narratives, make sense of their entry into prostitution. These ‘beginning stories’ are particularly interesting to me since I believe they can tell us something about both how the participants make sense of their entry into prostitution and

what the challenges and possibilities of narrating prostitution experience are. Edward Said defines beginnings as “*the first step in the intentional production of meaning*” (Said, 1985, p. 5). I like to think of these stories as the first step in the production of meaning in the participants’ narratives. As the participants make sense of their entry into prostitution they introduce the settings in which their narratives unfold and the positions from which they are told.

### To have a beginning, you have to have a story

...Virginia Woolf writes in *The Waves* “*if there are no beginnings and no endings there are no stories*”, we must not forget that the opposite also holds: if there are no stories there are no beginnings (Leander, 2008, p. 26).

The quote above challenges a commonsensical understanding of beginnings. Instead of seeing beginnings as natural, beginnings are seen as being read into the world to help us structure an otherwise random collection of events (Leander, 2008, p. 26-27). By casting our experiences in narrative form we structure and make sense of them.

To have a beginning, you have to have a story. The beginnings the research participants narrated were responses to me asking them to tell me the story of their prostitution experience. These are stories evoked in the specific social context of the interview. The interview context constitutes part of the present from which the past is addressed, this context has inevitably left an imprint on the stories. The stories have unfolded between me and the research participants. The first question in the interviews was: *If you were to tell me about your prostitution experience, where would you begin that story?* This question elicited many different responses. In some interviews it led to long accounts of the circumstances that made prostitution seem like a viable option, in some it generated detailed descriptions of the first encounter with a client, in others it led to stories of the experiences and events that had constituted the person as a particular subject, as a ‘sexual being for others’. Some of these stories were stories that appeared to be fixed, stories that had been told many times before. Others were told for the first time and were more exploratory, took more winding roads and were less certain. Some of the participants narrated their experience in a chronological sequence, others revisited the beginning many times. In some of the interviews the beginning was given new meaning, or even recomposed later on in the interview.

To make the structure of the stories a central part of the analysis challenges a reading of stories only for their content (Smith & Watson, 2001). I am interested both in the content of the stories and the narration itself. The chapter is therefore divided into two parts. In the first part I engage with the stories in terms of their content, *what is told?* I pose questions like: How do the participants make sense of their entry into prostitution? and: How do they describe the context in which they entered into prostitution? I also discuss what these stories might tell us about the dispositif of prostitution, the complex network of discourses, power relations and practices, which has created the conditions of possibility for the entry into prostitution, and for these stories to emerge.

In the second part of the chapter I engage with the narration of the beginning stories, *how they are told*. Here I begin to explore what the participants *do* when they narrate their prostitution experience. I pose questions like: What are the challenges and possibilities of narrating prostitution experience? What makes a certain story possible? And: How does the present from which the past is addressed affect the story told?

In this chapter you will be introduced to ten of the participants. I have chosen their beginning stories, not because they are exceptional, rather because they touch on themes that are recurrent in many of the participants' narratives. Seven of the participants will be introduced in the first part of the chapter, three in the second.

## **7.1 What the participants tell about their entry into prostitution**

In exploring the participants' stories about how they came to enter into prostitution, it quickly became clear that many of these stories spoke both of technologies of power/domination and of resistance. Contrary to the dominant antagonist discourses, in which the entry into prostitution is constructed as either conditioned by force or as an exercise of free will, most of the participants made sense of their entry into prostitution as *both* a result of constricting class and gender structures of power/domination *and* as an effect of a desire for independence or freedom, and/or a means to a different end, both as can be seen as a form of resistance. The image of the entry into prostitution that the beginning stories paint is one of complex relations of power, domination and resistance rather than a clear cut matter of 'choice'/'force'. I begin the section with framing this maze of relations of power/domination/resistance within my theoretical framework, as I introduce the particular theoretical tools I use in

analyzing the beginning stories. I then move into the storyworld. By the end of the section I discuss what the beginning stories might tell us about the dispositif of prostitution.

### Power, domination, resistance and the matter of choice

Why women enter into prostitution has been a matter of debate since prostitution first became an object of inquiry in medical-scientific discourse. As discussed in Chapter Five, poverty, lust for luxury, immorality and psychopathology have been recurrent explanatory models. In the 1970s new explanatory models emerged. Within radical feminist and liberal feminist discourse on prostitution, the matter of 'choice' became a central issue in the prostitution debate.

The debate on the matter of choice has been pursued from two antagonist positions: 'the right to be free from prostitution' versus 'the right to freely choose to engage in prostitution'. The antagonist character of the debate obscures the interconnected nature of structure and agency, as the focus is either on structure (radical feminism) or agency (liberal feminism). However, lately a less antagonist discussion on the matter of choice has emerged on the prostitution field. The dichotomy of free and forced prostitution has been questioned (Phoenix, 1999). It has been argued that *most* women's choices are severely limited by their disadvantaged position within hierarchal structures of class, gender and ethnicity. This does however, not imply that women do not make choices. But the choice to enter into prostitution has to, from such a perspective, be understood in relation to the position from which the choice is made and the hierarchal structures that permeate that position.

As discussed in Chapter Five, prostitution has, in Sweden, since the 1970s, mostly been analyzed within the realm of repressive power. In the current prostitution debate this is true for both the institutionalized radical feminist discourse and for liberal feminist discourse. In liberal feminist discourse, prostitution is discussed as repressed by normative hierarchies of sexual expression. Prostitution between 'consenting adults' is discussed as 'a matter of having the right to make decisions regarding one's own body and sexuality'. How desires are constructed in the context of patriarchal and capitalist social relations is thus not a matter for analysis. In radical feminist discourse, desire is understood as socially constructed, however, power is still understood as repressive, centralized in male institution and possessed by men (Sawicki, 1991). While radical feminists construct power as a commodity possessed by 'the client' and exercised over 'the prostitute',

liberal feminists view the legal apparatus of the state as the main source of repressive power (O'Connell Davidson, 1998, p. 16). With an understanding of power as repressive, freedom is constituted as freedom from repressive norms, freedom is to be outside of power. As discussed before, Foucault challenges the idea of power as repressive and urges us to have a more complex understanding of power. With an understanding of power as productive, there is no outside of power, power is omnipresent. As discussed before, a common misconception of Foucault's theorization of power, given his notion of power as omnipresent, is that the subject is caught in networks of power and domination without any means of resistance. Some scholars have criticized Foucault's theorization of subjectivity for resulting in determinism. They view Foucault's subject as totally determined, enmeshed in relationships of power and produced as an effect through disciplines and practices. These scholars juxtapose 'the agent' to 'the passive body' (McNay, 1991). This juxtaposition recapitulates a view of subjectivity that Foucault was critical of. For Foucault, bodies are both passive and active. Power and resistance are inevitably linked together.

By positioning the subject in relations of power/resistance, Foucault suggests a dialectic relationship between power and resistance. Agents are neither as autonomous in exercising their will as liberalism suggests, nor are their actions entirely determined and constrained by wider structures as suggested in structural thinking (Chambon, Irving & Epstein, 1999). An understanding of power as productive allows for a less antagonist understanding of the matter of choice since it offers an analytical framework which is sensitive to the *interrelated* structural and agentic aspects of prostitution experience. Sawicki argues that a Foucauldian analysis of power, similar to a radical feminist analysis, entails a politicization of the personal and thereby "*avoids the liberal trap of conceiving of our personal desires and relationships as outside of power*" (Sawicki, 1991, p. 44). However, unlike radical feminist theory, it does not treat power as repressive but rather as productive and does thereby not locate power in a monolithic structure or a central institution, thus allowing for an agentic subject to emerge. In reconceptualizing power as omnipresent, Foucault argues that there is no 'outside of power', no freedom from power. If power is everywhere then freedom must be defined in other terms - as resistance (McLaren, 2002, p. 203). Freedom, from such a perspective, is not a final state to be realized but occurs only through its exercise as resistance (McLaren, 2002, p. 41).

## Resistance

In exploring the power/resistance of the beginning stories I will, with my starting point in Tamboukou's work, draw both on Foucauldian analytics of power and the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of desire. In theorizing resistance, Tamboukou (2006) has made connections between Foucauldian and Deleuzo-Guattarian lines of thought. She has argued that Foucauldian analytics of power cannot fully account for the different dimensions of resistance and has therefore, in her work, turned to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desire.

The analysis of 'assemblages' or 'dispositifs' is central to both Deleuze and Guattari's, and Foucault's work (Patton, 2000). However, there are important differences between their respective approaches to assemblages. While Foucault viewed dispositifs as assemblages of power, Deleuze and Guattari understood assemblages as of power and of desire. Desire, unlike in psychoanalysis, is regarded as a productive force, producing reality, not as a lack (Patton, 2000, p. 70). While desire usually is regarded as lack - we desire something because we lack it, Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of desire does not refer to conscious desires, the desire for a particular object, but rather to an unconscious drive, a moving force (Smith, 2007).

In Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy, assemblages are constituted through processes of 'territorialization' and 'deterritorialization', processes of grounding, respectively uprooting (Tamboukou, 2010b, p. 687). A territory is a system of any kind: conceptual, linguistic, social or affective (Patton, 2010, p. 143). While processes of territorialization fix and stabilize the assemblage, a deterritorialization breaks up an established configuration of power through *lines of flight* that escape a given territorialization (Patton, 2010, p. 44). In Tamboukou's work, she explores women's processes of resisting what they are, 'woman', 'working class', 'wife', et cetera, by following lines of flight, by continuously *becoming other*. Lines of flight is, she argues, another way of thinking about resistance outside a repressive model of power (Tamboukou, 2010b). Unlike technologies of resistance, lines of flight are not always conscious or necessarily agentic but desire driven and therefore capture different dimensions of resistance (Tamboukou, 2000). While technologies of resistance are responses to power, desire deterritorializes subjects, propelling them into lines of flight. Some argue that the difference between power and desire can be equated to a difference between the negative force of power and the positive force of desire (Patton, 2000, p. 74). In her theorization of resistance Tamboukou (2003c) suggests that

we get rid of the binarisms of power versus desire. She also suggests that, instead of searching for a generalized theoretical configuration of power and desire, we explore power/desire connections in specific contexts. She argues that power relations and forces of desire are 'constantly at play' in creating conditions of possibility for resistance.

As I stated in the beginning, the participants spoke of the entry into prostitution not only as an effect of power but also as a result of a desire for freedom and independence. With my starting point in Tamboukou's theorization of resistance as conditioned by both power relations and forces of desire I will, as we move into the storyworld, explore the power, domination and resistance of the beginning stories.

### A fundamental flaw in the system

With an understanding of agency as existing within the structural conditions of one's life, I am interested in how the material and discursive conditions in which we are embedded set the possibilities for agency. When asked where to begin the story about their prostitution experience many of the participants came to tell stories about the specific circumstances that first made prostitution appear as a viable option to them. Despite their different class backgrounds, many of the participants were, at the time of their entry into prostitution, either unemployed, on low-paying jobs or social security benefits, some of them were single mothers. Instances such as falling sick, being in debt, being cut off benefits, becoming the sole provider for your children, et cetera, were frequently mentioned as what made one enter into prostitution. Prostitution was by most made sense of not primarily as a means to an end but as Janelle Galazia phrases it a 'means to a different end' (Galazia, 2007).

Sonja is a defiant and witty woman in her late fifties. For the last eight years she had depended on escorting to support herself. Sonja and I had met before, when I was still working at the Prostitution Unit, but we had never spoken of how she had entered into prostitution. When I asked her where she would begin the story of her prostitution experience, she told me about the particular situation she was in when prostitution started to appear as a viable option to her. She had recently moved to the city to another city to get away from her abusive ex-husband, in search for a new life. While having established herself in her new home, she still struggled with the physical and emotional effects of the trauma she had been subjected to. As she suffered from post-traumatic stress, she was unable to work

and therefore applied for sickness benefits. Despite having a doctor's referral and a medical certificate claiming she was unable to work, the Social Insurance Agency came to a different conclusion. Sonja was considered able to work, and was therefore obliged to accept any offers of employment, regardless of whether it would require her to move to another city. Her story painted a vivid picture of that time.

Back then I hardly got out of bed during the days. I had a good friend who used to call me to check on me so that I at least got up and had something to eat. But I was doing, very, very bad. I had created a new life for myself here and I realized I couldn't handle a move. I couldn't do it again, I was too sick. I didn't have the strength. I'm still convinced I would have completely fallen to pieces. I wouldn't have survived it. It would have killed me. So I simply had to figure out a way to make a living, in the least strenuous way, the least amount of work for the best possible pay and then this was what came to mind. I've always been very open when it comes to sex and I figured, if I could get paid for a pleasure, then that's okay.

Sonja spoke of her entry into prostitution as both a result of the particular situation she was in at the time and as conditioned by her 'openness' when it comes to sex. When she continued her story, prostitution was further made sense of as a result of a 'fundamental flaw in the system':

S – The paradox is, if the Social Insurance Agency would have accepted the doctor's referral, I never would have gotten involved in this from the start.

A – Right.

S – So it could be perceived as a fundamental flaw in the system... It's somewhat peculiar that society on the one hand condemns prostitution and on the other hand makes you enter into it (laughs).

A – Yes, isn't it?

S – Yes. Anyhow, it wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for that.

A – You felt like you didn't have any other choice?

S – Yes, I mean, what do you do when you're told by the Social Insurance Agency that you are healthy and then you find out that you could end up getting a job anywhere in Sweden and you will be forced to take it?

Sonja primarily made sense of her entry into prostitution as an effect of a 'fundamental flaw in the system'. Even though she was suffering from the effects

of the abuse she had been subjected to and was sick and incapable to work (she was later on diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder) she was denied public assistance. Sonja's beginning story speaks of the problem of a society that, with Sonja's words, on the one hand '*condemns prostitution*', while on the other hand '*makes people enter into it*'. As discussed in Chapter Five, prostitution was, in Sweden, already in the early 1970s discussed as unworthy of a social democratic welfare state. It was viewed as a remnant from the past, as the welfare state grew stronger prostitution would be eliminated. In the 2010s, the welfare state is dwindling and women still find themselves in situations in which prostitution appears as a viable option. While prostitution has been constructed as having no place in a gender equal society, inequalities are still gendered. Many of the participants clearly made sense of their entry into prostitution as related to limited possibilities, opportunities and options to secure material and social stability. Condemning prostitution by prohibiting the purchase of sexual services does not *in itself* eradicate the circumstances that make some women enter into prostitution.

O'Connell Davidson speaks of prostitution as embedded in "*a particular set of social relations that produce a series of variable and interlocking constraints upon action*" (O'Connell Davidson, 1998, p. 18). A radical feminist understanding of prostitution gives primacy to gender as a structuring principle. However, to understand the material and discursive conditions in which Sonja's entry into prostitution is embedded, an intersectional understanding of structural force is necessary. Sonja's story speaks of how different structures interlock and intersect in producing constraint upon her action. Both the fact that Sonja was denied sickness benefits and the labor market policy that requires unemployed to move for work could be placed in the larger context of workfare politics and a general tightening of eligibility for public assistance. Sweden's recent turn to a workfare policy is underpinned by neo-liberal discourse on 'personal responsibility', fostering ideas which proclaim that the causes of poverty are largely traceable to attributes and behavior of poor people themselves. As a working class, disabled woman, Sonja's action space is constrained by intersecting structures of class, gender and disability.

An understanding of power and resistance as inevitably interlinked, proposes that people are constantly subjected to the effects of power, but to varying degrees themselves also exercise power. Sonja's beginning story could be read both as a story about the effects of power and domination that placed her in a situation in

which she was forced to ‘choose’ to enter into prostitution as a survival strategy, and as a story about resistance, about resisting the system, about resisting poverty. However, even if her entry into prostitution is read as an act of resistance, Sonja made sense of prostitution as the only option to ‘make a living’, her entry into prostitution is thereby overdetermined. Exercising resistance, despite being dependent on prostitution to make a living is a central theme in Sonja’s narrative, as we shall see as her story unfolds in the following chapters.

### Becoming her own

While Sonja mostly made sense of her entry into prostitution as an effect of power and a technology of resistance, other participants’ beginning stories spoke of the entry into prostitution, not only as an effect of power but also as a line of flight. The territorialization that was escaped by the entry into prostitution shifted from person to person. For some women it was mainly about material conditions, for others it was more about constraints of a relationship or an emotional state. In Therese’s case, the entry into prostitution was made sense of as an effect of her desire to ‘become her own’.

Therese is in her mid-thirties, we got in touch through her former contact at the Prostitution Unit. When we first met, it had been about two years since she exited prostitution. She was in a work training program and was in the process of re-entering the job market after having been on sick leave for a couple of years. Therese comes from a working class background. She was subjected to sexual abuse as a child, during our interviews she talked about how she had struggled with the material and emotional effects of that experience throughout her adult life. Therese entered into prostitution when she was in her early thirties. She was working at the time, but because of the effects of her traumatic childhood experiences, she had a problem maintaining employment. She had an apartment, but due to lack of financial security, she was afraid she might lose it. In her beginning story, she made connections between the entry into prostitution, the desire for a ‘lockable haven’, a home of her own and to ‘become her own’:

T – The satisfaction came from, even when things were extra bad, always being able to count the money in the money jar and check how many rents ahead you had earned. The most important thing for me was to have somewhere to live. I could almost go to any length to avoid being homeless again, because I had been when I left home after all the conflicts with my mom and even after the first time I moved out when I was seventeen. I ended up going back to live there

when I needed somewhere temporary to stay before moving and that's the last time I was abused. I ran away. I was living outdoors, it was better, because at least I was my own! I realized later that I had my own homelessness routines. I didn't realize it then because I didn't see myself as homeless. I just saw myself as somebody getting by.

A – Yes, and that's who you were, weren't you? Somebody getting by.

T – Yes in one way, but you know, to draw parallels between yourself and people who are doing the same things as you are... people who are living outdoors and people who are prostituting. The only thing I didn't do was alcohol and drugs, I mean not more alcohol than me drinking at a party, but I noticed that it always made me feel bad. So I don't drink, I'm not a total abstainer, but I don't really drink, it's for the best. But I never saw myself as homeless either. I mean you wake up, you go to the underpass. I mean you get up from where you've been sleeping on a bench, in the park or in the graveyard and you go to the underpass and start playing music to earn the first money of the day, then you can go to the central station and take a shower, or you just wash up in the sink, if you want to save money. Then you eat breakfast, I mean very little of everything, not a breakfast buffet or anything but a small French fries at McDonalds for example. It doesn't cost too much. Then you keep playing guitar and in the afternoon you start thinking about where to go that night. I probably wasn't as fresh as I hoped I was, even if I had clean clothes in my bag. I never considered myself homeless, even if I in retrospect realize that I actually lived outdoors. I supported myself through playing the guitar and after a while through serving coffee at a coffee shop, off the books. I hoped that no authority would find me and that mom wouldn't cause any trouble. So when I finally got a home of my own it was worth everything to me. I have somewhere to go. Somewhere to think, write, hide, go away from, come back to, sleep in and isolate myself in, even if that's not that good... But I have a place where no one can reach me, if I don't want to be reached. You unplug the phone and close the drapes and then it's completely quiet. I never had that luxury when I was little and lived in my mother's and her boyfriend's house. I tried to build barricades there behind the door of my room so that he [mother's boyfriend] wouldn't be able to get in. I put a board against the door knob so that you couldn't turn it. But it wasn't a real barricade, it was a child who had put it up and all he had to do was turn the door knob for it to fall down. I never had a place like that, my own lockable haven.

A – No, I see.

T – It made me feel real good to be able to count the money and see for how much longer I could stay here.

Therese made sense of her entry into prostitution as what allowed her to keep the keys to her own 'lockable haven'. Having a home of her own is, in her story, connected to 'becoming her own'. Having "*somewhere to go, somewhere to think, write, hide*", somewhere where 'no one could reach her if she did not want to be reached'. Therese's entry into prostitution is made sense of as both an effect of extreme vulnerability caused by relations of power and domination and as a line of flight, uprooting her and allowing her to become other, to become 'her own'. Her beginning story is an example of how power relations and forces of desire connect in creating conditions of possibility for resistance. Analyzing her story as both an effect of power relations and of forces of desire requires acknowledging both the particular relations of power and domination that constituted the territorialization that she attempted to escape, and her desire to 'become her own', as what propelled her into prostitution.

### Becoming (un)touchable

While Sonja and Therese both occupied disadvantaged social locations, both of them coming from working class backgrounds and lacking educational qualifications, the participants' narratives suggest that women with disparately different social locations make sense of their entry into prostitution as a means to a different end.

Maria and I first met at a conference she attended as one of a few representatives from the sex workers' rights movement. Maria is in her mid-thirties, and comes from an upper middle class background. Maria is an academic and well read on prostitution research. When I told her about my study she volunteered to participate. She said she wanted to tell her story, to challenge representations of 'the prostitute as a victim'. Considering Maria's motivation for participating in the study, I expected her narrative to be a counter-narrative to the narrative about 'the prostitute as desperate and victimized'. I was therefore, at first, surprised when Maria begun her narrative with a lengthy and quite emotional account of what preceded her entry into prostitution.

M – That story would begin one and a half years ago when I was on sick leave and ehm... quite condemned by the authorities.

A – Mm.

M – Mm, they said – You are not employable, you are too sick. You are too unwell. We want to put you on disability. (crying)

A – Mhm.

M – Mm, ehm and I said... I fought tooth and nail because I didn't want to be on disability.

A – No.

M – Mm... so I was in, what's called, work training, I was waltzing around these different places but really you were just being used. It was organizations and other places that needed work force but didn't want to pay for it. They had no interest what so ever in employing you in the long run.

A – Right.

M – They just wanted someone... you know, often you get to run errands and those type of things which doesn't feel right. So the discussions with the Social Insurance Agency and the Employment Office were quite bitter. I was unemployed and I was on sick leave and they thought I should be on disability, but I thought I had more to give.

Maria was on sick leave, she had been diagnosed with Borderline and was suffering from depression. However, she had no intention to give up on re-entering the job market. Maria continued her story by narrating how the thought of being on disability while still in her early thirties made her decide to end her life. She decided to write her last will. With this intention she went to a funeral agency. But here her story took a turn, the woman working at the agency told Maria that she was busy and asked her to call and make an appointment for another day. This unexpected turn made Maria's thoughts go in another direction.

Then I thought, there's this other... I was there to write my last will, there's another last way out. That many women may see as the last way out... (crying) well you know to support themselves. Well I wanted to support myself, I didn't want any money from authorities. I'm raised that way, you shouldn't accept money from authorities, you should be capable, you should be accomplished.

Maria's desire to be able to support herself made her contemplate, what she termed – 'the last way out'. This was when prostitution started to appear like a viable option to her.

M – So I gathered all this information online, like *The escorts ABC* and *The escorts little red book*, that type of information and then I posted an ad and that's how I started. I thought it would be terrible. I thought it would feel like getting raped. I was actually pretty much convinced it would feel like getting raped, but it still appeared as a better option to me. (crying)

A – Yes.

M – And so I went there and it was... well I went there and okay, I might not have been comfortable, I was very nervous.

A – Of course.

M - But it wasn't that bad. And I met a man who was an engineer and we talked... Well, we were on the same level intellectually. We talked about wines, he was pretty interested in wines and food and things like that and we talked for quite a bit and afterwards he said – Well you sounded so nice over the phone so I decided to... ehm... He tipped me a thousand crowns. We had agreed on a price of four thousand and he gave me five thousand. That was about half of what I got as entitlement from the Social Insurance Agency, so I felt... I felt very relieved and I thought there will always be a way for me. Nobody can do me any harm. I am in one way... Speaking in antonyms... at the same time as I became very touchable, since you have to [shows the touching of her body with her hands] I also became untouchable, because the authorities couldn't touch me. I could take the money I had earned and put it in a safe deposit box that no one knew about.

Maria's beginning story, similarly to Therese's, speaks of an interplay between power relations and forces of desire. Her entry into prostitution was both made sense of as a result of her desire to become 'untouchable' and as a 'last way out'. Maria's entry into prostitution could be described as a line of flight that deterritorialized her from the particular configuration of relations of power and domination she was territorialized in. Maria challenged the idea of 'the prostitute' as 'passive body', 'passive victim'. In a situation marked by no other options than to accept to be put on disability, she created her own option. Prostitution became a means to become independent and thereby an option to live. Unemployment, being unwell and the threat of being put on disability no longer mattered, the authorities could no longer 'touch her'. This deterritorialization allowed Maria to become other, to become 'untouchable'. However, to become 'untouchable' Maria also had to, literally, become touchable. The theme of prostitution making Maria (un)touchable was central to her narrative and something I will return to in what follows.

Maria also made sense of prostitution as 'the last choice'. In her story she framed her entry into prostitution in the larger story of prostitution as a gendered survival strategy, "*what many women see as the last way out*". In her study about women involved in street prostitution in the UK, Jo Phoenix writes about

how the construction of prostitution as a gendered survival strategy is predicated upon women's lives as characterized by limited possibilities for securing material and social stability (Phoenix, 1999, p. 75). The lives of the women in Phoenix' study were all marked by poverty. Similar to the women in Phoenix' study, both Sonja and Maria spoke of prostitution as a survival strategy. Survival did however take on different meaning in their respective stories. While Sonja spoke of prostitution as a strategy to make a living, survival was given a different meaning in Maria's story.

M – It was the last choice. Maybe it wasn't what I wanted. It wasn't what I had in mind when I was struggling, studying at the University. It wasn't what I wanted, but that's life, sometimes you're down to your last choice.

A – Was it about survival to you?

M – Yes! I mean it wasn't about short term survival. It wasn't that I needed 5000 crowns right away. Absolutely not, there was money in the bank you know. It was absolutely not... I always have... you now in case the roof will start leaking... You always have at least 100 000 in the bank if you have a house, you know. It wasn't like that, it was more like long term I'll be fine. If I make this money every now and then, if I do it a couple of times a week, I'll be fine.

To Maria prostitution was far from being about short term survival, her financial state when entering into prostitution would by most be perceived as rather privileged for someone in their early thirties. Being raised in an upper middle class family, her life had not been marked by poverty. However, after falling sick she had been in a financially strained situation and at the risk of being put on disability her future held little promise of financial security. Prostitution was, rather than a means to short term survival, a means to secure her long term survival.

M – I have a house. I paid it off when I was thirty-one years old, paid it off! I struggled to do that. I have a car. I don't have a loan on the car. I don't have any student loans. I worked almost fulltime while studying. So now I have a little house, it's not a big and luxurious house but it's at least worth about two and a half million and I envisioned the Social Insurance Agency forcing me into a disability pension and then you get cut off. With my... with the diagnosis I have you will get cut off disability and then they start taking, first stocks, I mean realizable assets, stocks, funds, money in the bank. Then they take your

car, that's gone. Then they take the house. Little by little that's what the social services do, and then I would be stuck in a one bed room apartment in a bad neighbourhood.

A – That's what you envisioned would happen?

M – That's what I envisioned would happen.

A – And with the thought of that becoming your life you felt like you wouldn't want to live?

M – No, I wouldn't want to live then. There's some pride in it to, this is what I have.

Survival was, in Maria's story, not equated with obtaining the bare necessities of life, but rather about long term financial security. As mentioned before, while most of the participants made sense of the entry into prostitution as a means to a different end, their social location when entering into prostitution differed. While some, like Sonja and to a certain degree Therese, made sense of the entry as being about immediate survival, others, like Maria, made sense of it as a means to financial security, yet others, like Rebecca, made sense of it as a means to upwards social and class mobility.

### To live in a world you could not otherwise afford

I met Rebecca in a luxurious hotel in Stockholm, she was in the city for a week, working. She invited me to have breakfast with her in the beautiful dining hall of the hotel. The tables were set with starched white linen tablecloths, the breakfast buffet was lavish and the room was basking in morning sunlight. Rebecca is in her late forties and a chatty and expressive person. She is from a middle class background, was working part time as an administrator and was also, since four months, selling sex as an escort. Rebecca suffered from a medical condition that caused her severe ache, she fell ill when she was still studying at the university and since she didn't have the right insurance she ended up at the social services.

R – So there I was with four-hundred-thousand in student loans and lots of private debts at The Enforcement Agency. I decided to just let go a couple of years ago. You know you're supposed to be good and pay all your bills and then suffer... I just let go and I thought the Enforcement agency will have to deal with it. It was the best thing I've ever done. I wish I had done it before but I didn't, I was suffering. It's not good to be tense when you have pain. Ehm... so I have debts and there's a seizure on my pension, I hardly get anything. I live at the subsistence level.

A – Yes, how much is that?

R – I get my salary and I have filed that I'm taking the bus, which I don't (laughs) but how much could it be? Maybe seven/eight-thousand, rent included.

A – Right.

R – And the rent is over three-thousand, so it's a little difficult to make it work... I used to have this job on the side, singing at funerals, but it's quite mentally challenging. I guess you could think - Well, isn't this (prostitution) mentally challenging? But it's not. When you're singing you can't make any mistakes, it's a precarious situation. You have to deliver and keep yourself together. You can't be moved by their grief and there can be some very difficult situations. Children who have lost their parents, young children, teens... So I started to do it less and less.

Until two years ago I had only had sex within relationships. A relationship I had been in had just ended. I was a virgin until I was 33 (laughs) I've always been the type of person who do things my way, do what I feel like doing, and I just didn't feel like it. At first I was like - I don't care, and then when I felt like maybe now's the time, it was so embarrassing to still be a virgin so I waited because of that. It took some time (laughs). But anyway, my relationship ended and nothing was really happening as far as it comes to men and sure it's alright to be on your own but then after a while I started looking ... I thought maybe I should have somebody after all... I guess it's good to have someone (laughs). Not that I'm the cohabiting type, but you should... I don't know... I mostly found the men my age strange. That's what it's like when it comes to men my age, they have twenty million things to do. They have three children, with three different women. They have a dying mom, they have a motorcycle and they're part of the hunting team. They are members of a number of organizations and they are helping the neighbour and all their friends to remodel their houses. You end up being quite low on their list of priorities. I didn't like it. I felt like everybody had too much to do. Then it was summer and I felt like going travelling but I didn't have any money, so how could I? I posted an ad on one of these ordinary contact sites, I think it was Bodycontact. I said I wanted to travel and the person who travelled with me would get to touch my body (laughs). I felt like I'll kill two birds with one stone. I mean for Christ sakes, the men who I had been in relationships with, sure they were nice but they weren't good in bed. I felt like I could handle it, handle some fool. But I didn't want to travel with just anyone. I had some offers of amazing trips but the guys seemed quite crazy. It's one thing seeing somebody for an hour who's a little... who has a special fetish or something but it's a little hard to be away for a week or

two with somebody like that. But there was this guy from the south... he was funny... it turned out he was a member of Mensa and I always studied, I like interesting conversations, not just talking about football or the weather you know (laughs). He had sheepish type hair

A – Sheepish hair? Really curly?

R – Yes, more like a big afro type hair... and he was from the south. He was a man of my age, maybe some years younger or so. He hadn't had sex in some years so I thought it was a good deed to. We met in Copenhagen. He paid for the trip and the hotel room. We had fun, there was not a minute I regretted going with him. I didn't have any money for shopping but I didn't expect to. It was more the experience of walking there in the amusement park on a warm summer's night with the lanterns and everything... it was amazing.

Rebecca resisted the idea of 'the prostitute' as without choice by narrating how come she chose prostitution over singing at funerals. However, she also describes how her choice is conditioned both by her strained financial situation and the ache caused by her medical condition. As Rebecca spoke of her first experience of prostitution as killing two birds with one stone, getting both sex and money (travelling) I asked her what prostitution was primarily about to her. She said:

R – I would say the money, the money is very important. But it has crossed my mind that even when I've been looking for sex buddies I've never fancied the unemployed. I always wanted the ones who are a little better off than you. Then you could go out to eat and they would buy you dinner and stuff. So the money is important to me, it's not that important that I would do anything to... Some would pay a lot to do certain things but if I don't want to, it doesn't matter. I want to get something out of it too. I want it to be pleasant to me too. Then it isn't always. But for example yesterday, I had decided to go out to eat when I had an offer, but since I hadn't had dinner I said no. I was hungry. Even if you know you'll get two-thousand, that's money, but I rather wanted to eat and it could be I want to sleep too, so I don't do just anything. But yes I do see more clients here in one day than what I would back home. But it costs a lot to live here so it's not like I'm making a lot of money, but I get to live like this, that's what I'm thinking.

A – So that mean something in itself?

R – Yes.

A – What does it mean to you?

R – I get to live in a world that I couldn't afford otherwise. I have a friend who

I travel with and he has money but then it's on his terms. Then it's the hotels he wants to stay in. So when I travel with him, I'm thinking about what he likes. I mean I care about him a lot, I don't just do it to get to travel but... now I get to do exactly what I want.

Rebecca made sense of her involvement in prostitution as allowing her upward social and class mobility, allowing her to live in a world she could not afford otherwise. The financial gain from prostitution gave her the freedom to travel, to be independent, to do what *she* wanted to. (In)dependency was indeed a recurrent theme in the participants' narratives. It is also a theme that has been discussed in previous prostitution research (Phoenix, 2000, p. 40). Many of the participants spoke of the entry into prostitution as an option to dependency on the welfare system or, as in Rebecca's case, on one particular man. By entering into prostitution, Rebecca defied restrictions framed by class, gender and disability - structures of domination. However, the independence prostitution was perceived as offering was conditioned by differing degrees of economic compulsion, dependence. Rebecca did not 'need' the money she made in prostitution to 'make a living', prostitution was not a means to an end but rather a means to a different end. Depending on the social location of the person, the perceived independence of prostitution differed.

Sonja's, Therese's, Maria's and Rebecca's beginning stories are permeated by power/resistance. As stated before, most of the participants made sense of their entry into prostitution as means to a different end and both as an effect of power and as an act of resistance. The independence prostitution was perceived as offering was however constrained by different degrees of economic compulsion. Showden argues that the problem with venerating prostitution as an act of resistance is that most prostitution is engaged under conditions closer to domination than to power relations creating ruptures of resistance (Showden, 2011, p. 159). According to Foucault power does not include freedom but imply it: "*It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape*" (Foucault, 1982, p. 225). Some of the participants did not perceive themselves as having any means of escape, as they were depending on prostitution to get by.

### The law of chastity

As I stated before I understand agency as existing within the structural conditions of one's life. In the beginning stories presented so far the entry into

prostitution has mostly been discussed in the terms of how different structural conditions produce material conditions in which prostitution becomes a means to a different end and, for some, a line of flight. The beginning stories of Sonja, Maria, Rebecca, Therese and the other participants who made sense of their entry into prostitution as both an effect of power and an act of resistance were mostly about the particular situations that made prostitution appear as a viable option. The beginning stories I will explore next are quite contrarily mostly about how women are constituted as particular subjects, subjects who act. While the previous beginning stories were centred on the situation the person was in when entering into prostitution, these stories often began long before the actual entry into prostitution took place in time.

As discussed before, Foucault's theoretical project was not primarily concerned with analyzing the phenomenon of power but rather with creating a history of the different modes in which human beings in our culture are made subjects (Foucault, 1982). With an understanding of power as productive, power is seen as operating through constructing our subjectivities, shaping our identities and regulating our views of the world. Contrary to the autonomous liberal subject, the subject is not seen as a given but as constituted through discursive practices. Subjectivity is understood as emerging from the discursive practices that produce individuals as subjects (Chambon, Irving & Epstein, 1999, p. 139). While engaging with the beginning stories of Nadia, Elena and Yulia I will discuss the structural conditions and discursive and non-discursive practices that produced them as particular subjects who acted.

Nadia is in her late twenties. She is an artist and at the time of our interviews she was working part time and receiving sickness benefits. When we met it had been about two years since Nadia exited prostitution. When I asked her where she would begin her story about her experiences of prostitution, she told me a story of her upbringing. What she experienced and what she was taught as a young girl growing up in a patriarchal religious setting.

N – It's quite simple really... it begins somehow with me feeling a huge disappointment and lack of trust in... how... particularly older men treated me when I was in my teens.

A – Mm...

N – Ehm... As soon as you started getting a little bit of breasts and booty and all that, people started watching you and evaluating you. I'm raised extremely

religiously and I wasn't allowed to dress in a certain way because then I could tempt the men. I literally had to sit and listen to older family guys saying things like that. The bishop told me I had to think about how I dress when coming to service because the thought had crossed his mind.

A – Really?

N – Yes, and there were many, or it was very... They were all over me. Then you started to realize that people evaluate you and your body. If you dress a certain way you almost have yourself to blame. And how do you take control in a situation like that, when you don't feel like you have that control or that love for yourself? So I grew to hate myself very much... it became... Well, if you have sex before marriage you are excluded. That's their rules, but they really didn't exclude you it was more like a threat, you know... And... having had sex... having broken the law of chastity as it is called... I had to read a book called *The Miracle of Forgiveness* in which it was stated that that the sin, the sin next to murder is the sin against the law of chastity. Those were pretty harsh words, it was really hard for me, it made me feel like a murderer really. And since the sex I had back then never was voluntary I felt really worthless. I'm subjected to things I have no control over, I don't have control over my own body but yet I commit a sin next to murder, I must be completely worthless. They talked about God loving all his children ... but he couldn't love me, I must be impossible to love (crying). I must be the only child on this earth that God doesn't love, that's how I felt.

(...)

A – And when you were forced to read this... what was it called again?

N – *The Miracle of Forgiveness and the Sin Next to Murder.*

A – Yes, how old were you then? And how come they found out?

N – They found out because I told them I wanted to be excluded, I didn't want to be a member. I was sixteen when I told them, but this had been going on when I was fourteen and fifteen as well. If I had a certain length of skirt or a certain neck line they were on me immediately, the men, or the leaders. There were only men who were leaders or patriarchs as they are called. I'm raised Mormon and certain men are called patriarchs. But anyhow, you asked me how they found out. I had a friend who had been excluded because she fell in love with another girl and homosexuality is not accepted among Mormons so she was excluded and... Well you get excluded if you have sex before marriage, whether it is a same sex relationship or not. So when I told them I thought that I would be excluded, but it was rather – You seem so remorseful and you want to repent, maybe God will forgive you. I was blessed and encouraged to go

home and read this book or this chapter in the book, about how serious the sin next to murder, or the law of chastity is...

And then there were other things... Like I was taught... I had to sit alone with an older man, one of the bishop's advisors and talk about women, morals and how important it is that you dress appropriately. He told me a story about a carnival, the Brazilian carnivals and that the girls who are dancing samba there only wear little panties and a bra when they are there dancing and he said: - Well it doesn't excuse anything, I mean there are many rapes during these carnivals, rape is wrong and everything but it is so easy to just tear off that little piece of fabric, it's so easy. And when you're thirteen, fourteen and is taught that it's so easy, if I'm wearing too little clothes, for somebody to force me to have sex. Do I even have the right to protest? Will anybody believe me if I tell them what happened? We were taught these things, the law of chastity.

I remember another time, it was all of us youths, another advisor to the bishop told us that he knew a woman who was forced to have sex. They guy had told the woman... he had threatened to cut her or kill her if she didn't have sex with him. The woman had said that she still didn't know if she was right for having sex with the guy, that she still felt bad for having had sex. And he meant, he argued that the reason to her having angst was that it's *that* important to keep the law of chastity. Not that she was having angst because she was subjected to a trauma, to abuse, but because she had sinned. And that, all those things that I was taught I realize now that they have affected the way I deal with men. Even if I'm aware of it now and I try to break the patterns it is so fundamental to me.

Nadia's beginning story speaks of growing up in a patriarchal religious setting, of being sexualized and subjected to sexual abuse, of being constituted as a particular subject, an 'unchaste' and therefore undeserving victim. On a larger scale it speaks of how sex, women and women's bodies are constructed in patriarchal society. Nadia was taught by 'patriarchs' that as a woman (girl) she was responsible for not tempting (gown) men by dressing or behaving inappropriately, that rape is wrong but despite this, it is quite understandable that women are raped if they behave 'unchastely'. This is reflecting a patriarchal understanding of men's and women's sexuality in which men's sexual drive and impulses are constructed as uncontrollable and as an effect of their particular biological configuration, what has been referred to as the male sexual drive discourse (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p.191).

Nadia's beginning story also speaks of the regulation of female sexuality through dividing practices that categorize women as 'chaste' or 'unchaste', 'respectable' or 'unrespectable'. Ideas about female 'unchastity' are constitutive for the whore stigma. 'A whore' is not necessarily 'a prostitute' but an 'unchaste' and therefore unworthy woman and an undeserving victim, a victim who can be blamed. Even if we would like to think of Nadia's experiences growing up in a patriarchal religious setting as extreme, few women literally have to read about 'the law of chastity' in contemporary Swedish society, the discursive construct of 'the unchaste woman', 'the whore', still produces experiences for women. Nadia's story speaks of how discursive and non-discursive practices connect. Female bodies are ascribed meaning, these meanings are not merely discursive constructs but create physical, material and experiential realities (O'Neill, 2001, p. 145).

Rather than making sense of her entry into prostitution as an attempted escape or line of flight, Nadia made sense of it as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination. Nadia's life seemed to be lined with experiences of sexual abuse. After having been constituted as a sexual being for others and taught in church that women who are sexually abused most likely have their inappropriate behaviour to blame for it, Nadia was predisposed for further abuse.

N – Things were really crappy with my family back then, they were really upset with me... now they're happy for the way I write music. I don't want to say anything bad about them because we have a good relationship now. But back then they were really upset with me, you know singing my heart, upset with me not singing beautiful songs about how good life is. Since I didn't feel like life was that good, I didn't write those types of songs. My dad told me - If you keep playing this type of music all your blessings will be taken from you. Those were heavy words to bear... (...)

... and then there was this man or this older dude that told me the opposite. I could feel my dad wasn't proud of me, that he didn't like me. He literally told me back then that he wasn't sure whether he loved me and stuff like that (crying). And my mom she just accused me of looking slutty. She was very religious. Of course all teens and parents can fall out a little but this was more than that... it was more like psychological abuse almost. And then there was this older music guy that tells me – I don't have any children of my own but you're like a daughter to me.

A – Mm...

N – And at the same time he takes off his clothes and jerks off in front of me...

and all the things he did... so I felt there was something wrong with me, I'm worthless... and if this is the way it is, because that was the image I had, this is what men are like, they might as well do it to me because I'm worthless anyway (crying). I'm the only one on earth that God doesn't love. He might as well do it to me so he doesn't do it to someone else. That's pretty much what I thought. (...)

N – When I look back I realize that he was my first john in one way, because he... Even if I gave him money to finance these recordings I was still told – You're basically doing this for free, remember that! That was an argument for me not to say anything about him abusing me sexually... forcing me to do things or making me feel like I had to do things... And then I started to think about it - Maybe I should start charging for it. Really, I felt like why not? You might as well. I started having those thoughts then. That's basically what made me enter into prostitution. I had this issue, I felt like I didn't have any power over my own body. I felt... even when I didn't charge for sex, when I had it voluntarily I would get these panic attacks after. It was so strong, and when I said no to sex I would get panic attacks as well. If somebody wanted to have sex with me, somebody who I didn't want to have sex with I got a guilty conscious, I felt like I had to. Otherwise he would get angry and disappointed and I didn't want to make people sad and disappointed.

After several experiences of sexual abuse and rape, the death of a dear friend, and a failed suicide attempt Nadia decided to move to another city to get away from everything and to start anew. She followed a line of flight. She rented a room from an acquaintance from the music industry. After some weeks the man started making sexual advances on which Nadia panicked. She decided to move out the same night.

I was at 7-Eleven on the computer looking for a place to stay. It had to happen quickly, I was devastated. I felt like this is all... I had left to get away from all of that in the past. I wanted a normal life. I wanted to live like a normal person, to be grounded in myself and happy and content and then it was like I wasn't allowed to. So in this state of panic I search and call different numbers to find a place to rent. And then somebody answered, a woman who called herself Farrah. I meet Farrah the next day and she meets with me to take me to the place where I'm going to stay. Farrah... I thought she was a little tall, to be... she was Iraqi and I thought she was a little tall, many Iraqi women that I had met before had been shorter than me. But that was it, I didn't react to anything

else, and the reason for me saying that is that Farrah was transsexual. She was born man and in one sense she still was [a man] she still had her dick but she had taken pills to develop breasts. To me... I mean I have a lot of transsexual friends so what I'm about to say doesn't have anything to do with her being transsexual but the fact was that I thought that I was confiding in... I needed help and she sat there in the car and pretty quickly she asked questions like: Why are you moving? Where are you from? And I was so sad and devastated and almost about to cry there in the car and I started to tell her about some of the things that had happened to me. I thought that she was a woman, I mean, I don't want to be like that, but because of what I've been through I don't have the best view of men. And I thought what I was telling, I was telling to a woman.

A – Right.

N – A woman who seemed to care. I needed help, I had nowhere to go. I couldn't stay at the guy's place. And then she asked all those things, why, why I moved, what had happened before I moved. And then I told her about the rapes and she said – Unfortunately it's common, if there's a rumor about a girl other guys take the chance and then it happens over and over again to the same girl. It was kind of what had happened to me. It's like these assholes come to me because they know that...

A – ...it had happened before?

N – Yes, and there's a rumor or some weird energy... god knows what it is but that's the way it is and that's the way it was. And then I confided in her in hopes of getting help.

After moving in with Farrah's mother, Nadia and Farrah stayed in touch.

... Farrah came and visited every now and then and then she started to talk about selling sex. And I had very little money and I guess I felt, I guess I could do it. I've done it before. When I was given the proposal it just seemed so natural. Why not? If this is what everyone want... I had started to get... I had moved around a lot and my post was adrift, the letters that I did get were from the enforcement agency. I probably had seven or eight letters from the enforcement agency each month, it was horrible. When I got depressed after my friend died I started not caring about... I didn't care about paying the bills. Some of the things were from way back. There was a lot of debt because of my deep depression. The reason why her death got to me so badly was that I realized that it could have been me. I didn't want to live either. I just wanted to lay down next to her, by her grave. I kept going and tried to live but half of me only wanted to lay down next to her. Then you don't really care. Even though

I had decided to start over and move, it was like I only ran in to people giving me these proposals and wanting these things from me, throwing money at me. All of that was part of me considering starting to sell myself. It became this calm, crazy thought that yes, okay, does it really matter? I told myself that I'm a good person, I don't steal, I'm good to people. Fuck, I have the right to be as bad as I want to be to myself! I really don't like myself anyway. That's how I reasoned with myself and then I started selling and then it was from the street.

Nadia had followed a line of flight, she had decided to start over in a new place, for a new life. However, despite her desire to change her life it seemed to her as if everywhere she turned she ran in to people who proposed the same thing. As stated before, Nadia did not make sense of her entry into prostitution as a line of flight, rather as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination. Who she had been constituted to be seemed to determine who she could become.

Nadia was not the only one of the participants who made sense of her entry into prostitution as conditioned by prior experiences of sexualization and abuse, Elena told a similar story.

### Beginnings and becomings

Elena is in her mid-twenties. When we met for our first interview it had been about one and a half year since she exited prostitution. We got in touch through the Prostitution Unit where she previously had a therapeutic contact. Elena is from a middle class background, at the time of the interviews she had recently had a baby and was studying with the prospect to continue on to university studies. Elena's narrative was rich in detail and was quite obviously the result of years of reflection on how to make sense of her prostitution experience. When I asked Elena where she would begin her story she told a story of not only a beginning but also a becoming:

E – I started when I was fourteen. But I am starting to think that I've gotten that wrong too, that I was really thirteen when I start counting, but well somewhere around thirteen, fourteen and I... It started with a question really... you know – Would you consider...? And... the whole year before that was quite critical for the answer to become yes. I had had... or, I grew up in Lundala... May I begin that far back?

A – Of course!

E – It creates a better understanding... I grew up in Lundala, it's a white middle class community and I didn't have... or well I got a little bullied by some older

kids in school but my class was great. During the first six years in school and pre-school I had a really great class, where you felt safe you know. I look back at that time with joy.

Elena started her story with a beginning “*It started when I was fourteen...*” but in order to make sense of this beginning she continued her story with what had happened the year before.

After sixth grade Elena’s class was split up as the students were transferred to a new school. Elena was placed in a class where she didn’t know any of the other students. The transfer from sixth to seventh grade marked a shift in Elena’s story. From perceiving school as a safe and fun place Elena goes on to tell about the events that marked the beginning of a becoming.

Elena was introduced to a boy by her cousin, they later on became a couple. The boy was nineteen and Elena narrated how she felt pressured to have sex with him. She spoke of her first sexual experiences as awkward. Following these experiences a rumour was spread in school. She said:

It wasn’t the nice version that got out, it wasn’t two awkward kids having sex, it was porn and anal sex and how I sound when I have sex. So, sexually harassed in school? Yes, and under the supervision of adults.

Elena spoke of how adults failing to handle the situation in school contributed to making her situation even more difficult. For example she spoke of one occasion when she went to talk to the counsellor at the youth centre about what she was experiencing in school. The counsellor asked her who she had told about what had happened between her and her boyfriend. When Elena answered that she had talked about it with her girlfriends the counsellor suggested that it was Elena herself who had started the rumour. She went on to say that she had to see her part in it. Elena perceived it as if everybody was blaming her for what had happened, even her parents:

E – And my parents, I mean my mom knew even though she denies that to this day.

A – That she knew what was going on in school?

E – Yes, my mom is a teacher but at another school, so I was just shame. I mean I couldn’t wear certain clothes. I mean every time I put on a skirt it was like – Think about it before putting on that skirt! People are talking about you! And

I was like – But realize that it is *them* who are talking. It doesn't matter if I go to school dressed in a snow suit they would still have something to say.

Elena's story is another example of how discourses on 'respectable feminine sexuality' result in constructing certain women/girls as undeserving victims. The rumours that were spread about Elena were, by both the counsellor and Elena's mom, interpreted as a consequence of Elena's 'bad behaviour'. She was constituted as 'a whore' and therefore as an undeserving victim. When it was time for the summer break Elena was relieved.

So I was overjoyed when it was time for summer break. I didn't hide and that's something I respect myself a lot for today. I went to school in a situation when most others would have stayed home. But then when I read my diary I realize that maybe I could have let myself stay home instead of coming home and writing that! Feeling that bad...

Elena was struggling with feelings of shame projected onto her by others. During that summer another event took place, an event that reinforced Elena's sense of shame. One evening she and her sister were hanging out partying when a group of older guys approached them.

E – There's a guy there who has his eyes on me from the start... (...) He was aggressive without being violent.

A – Mm, I see...

E – Today I understand that he was aggressive but then I was just thinking he'll want to have sex with me and I don't want to. But he nags and we talk and... it's really hard for me to explain how I was reasoning but I thought if I go with him and explain... I thought it was embarrassing sitting there while he was trying to pull up my skirt so I thought I'll go with him and explain that I don't want to have sex. That's of course stupid because that's when he attacks me... So...

A – Well, you were fourteen years old, I mean how are you supposed to predict something like that when you're fourteen years old?

E – No you don't! (...) I was trying not to make him angry, I didn't want to embarrass him or me but so that's why we walked a little further away so that I could explain to him - You are rejected, and that was my down fall... It wasn't the most brutal rape I have experienced but it was... They were right... and it crushed me, and still today it's crushing me, but it's crushing me in a different way....

The rape led to Elena internalizing the shame that had been projected on to her, 'they were right'. The discursive construction of Elena as 'a whore' was here materialized in the violation of her body.

A – So this experience was connected with what had happened to you the year before, do I understand you correctly then? That it was some sort of proof of that there was something wrong with you?

E – Mm... maybe this is all that I am good for? Maybe you never have to ask for my permission, maybe you don't have to respect my body or my... That's exactly how it was... Maybe you don't have to show me the same respect you show other girls. (...) He made it so easy for me to feel I wasn't worthy. Because the rape was... not that it was the roughest one, but it was pretty rough and very arrogant. It took place twenty meters from the others, or maybe not twenty meters... Maybe it was, let's say a hundred, or fifty meters away, my memory is vague but I remember that I could see them and hear them talking so it could have been just around the corner. I don't remember but there was something so arrogant in what he did. It was really... it was really his right and my duty, he made it so loud and clear.... So I buried that event and I couldn't talk about it until... I think I was eighteen when I could formulate that it had even happened, there had been abuse after that that I had been able to talk about. But that was the beginning.

A – That was the beginning... And then, after that event... this was before prostitution, but it was that event that opened up for that becoming possible, do I understand you correctly then?

E – Yes, exactly, that's when the foundation was put down for making my answer yes.

In Elena's beginning story, she spoke of the chain of events and experiences that constituted her as a particular subject, 'a whore' and as 'a whore' a 'sexual being for others'. Elena connected who she was constituted to be with who she became. Her story was, similarly to Nadia's story, about what happened before the entry into prostitution. It is a story about a beginning in the form of a becoming. Unlike Nadia's story, set in the religious, overtly patriarchal context of the Mormon church it is set in mainstream society, in a white middle class community, with youth counsellors, junior high school teachers and family members who, if not endorse, at least do not question the stigmatization of Elena as 'a whore'. Elena spoke of the rape as the ultimate confirmation of her unworthiness, 'they were right' she was not worthy of the respect other girls were given. Her permission was not needed, sex was 'his right and her duty'. Elena made sense of her being

constituted as 'a sexual being for others' as what conditioned her entry into prostitution, as what later, when she had the proposal, made her accept it.

Then I had the proposal and I had it from my cousin. My cousin! It's hard to explain. She, which pisses me off even more, was nineteen. She had a baby when she was sixteen so she was home, she wasn't in school or anything. (...) School had started and this was in the fall, everything was crap, I was pushing things to the side but still life wasn't exactly great. School wasn't as bad, it wasn't this extreme harassment, both physical and emotional. It was very hands on at times but it had gotten better. Many of those who were in ninth grade had... or those who were in ninth grade were no longer there. I'm a little bigger now, I'm not the youngest and it's not as easy to bully me around. So I start hanging out with her, we have hung out before but now I start hanging out at her place after school and she asks me, and I'll never forget it. I'm not sure exactly how she asked me but I see her in front of me, sitting on the couch and everything. And I said yes. I guess I was a little curious and I think it was some form of kind, on the verge of being stupid, loyalty as well. I don't know if she would have taken no for an answer, but I don't think she would have forced me then, like she did later. (...) It was a lot of money for a fourteen year old. We're talking about sums like one thousand five hundred, she might as well have said fifteen thousand, I wouldn't have got the difference, it was a lot of money. I guess that was part of it too. (...) I agreed on trying it, and tried it I did. It wasn't the worst time, it was pretty mediocre. I mean he was mediocre. He came and picked me up in his car and we went to this place out in the woods and he... it was very awkward nobody got anything out of it, except money... and well he came, but it wasn't... Again clients... I don't know if you could say mentally retarded... but socially... I think he came in ten seconds it was like hi and poofsch, money well spent idiot! (laughs) My money lasted for more than ten seconds, I can say that much. But yeah, he was real awkward so it wasn't like I was scarred for life or anything. It was more like, it wasn't a good feeling. Then it wasn't like in the movies, like when Julia Roberts says that she throws up after her first time and it's so awful. It was more like... I didn't want to be there. I didn't want to be a whore. But I continued and that was the beginning of a long, long journey.

When Elena's cousin proposed that she should start to sell sex, she agreed to. Since Elena had been constituted as 'a whore' before her entry into prostitution, she did not make sense of her entry into prostitution as a rupture, rather as a

further entanglement in relations of power and domination. She spoke of her first encounter with a client as undramatic. However, even though it did not ‘scar her for life’ she did not want to ‘be there’, she did not want to ‘be a whore’.

### Seizing those seconds

Foucault critiques the understanding of sex as an autonomous agency by arguing that: “...sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations and pleasures” (Foucault, 1990, p. 155). Patriarchy constitutes a certain configuration of power relations, relations that produce sensations, pleasures and desires. In patriarchal society sex, has been constructed as belonging to men and lacking in women, but at the same time, “as that which by itself constitutes woman’s body” (Foucault, 1990, p. 152). Women have thus been constructed as sexual objects rather than sexual subjects. While Nadia and Elena narrated how they through sexualization, sexual harassment and abuse were constituted as sexual objects, sexual beings for others, Yulia spoke of how her entry into prostitution was conditioned by her need to be validated.

Yulia and I got in touch through the prostitution unit that she had been in contact with earlier. Yulia is in her mid-thirties and worked at an NGO. When we met, five years had passed since she exited prostitution. Yulia is originally from Russia where she was raised as an only child by her mother in a sheltered upper middle class home. She migrated to Sweden when she was in her early twenties. When I asked Yulia to tell me about her prostitution experience, she began her story in Moscow.

I started going to the SAS Hotel in Moscow when I was eighteen, seventeen, very early. I was sitting in the bar catching these cool guys. There was a lot of running up and down to their rooms, it was really full-fledged prostitution even though it was called elite prostitution. It was cool you know. We were sitting there, super fancy with our diamonds. We were super cool. We thought we were the coolest girls in the world. I was seventeen when I started this but then I started to think - I’m not a prostitute. I can’t keep doing this. So I put an ad in the paper looking for a sponsor. One of the clients from the hotel wanted to be my sponsor, he asked me if I wanted to be his mistress and in that way I didn’t have to work and earn money the way I had been. He gave me a monthly salary and that was even cooler than sitting in the hotel so of course I wanted

that. I was eighteen and he was fifty but I thought it was really cool. (...) And then I met another guy the same way, through the hotel. So then I had two at the same time. I happened to fall in love with him, he was so caring, he showed consideration, he acted like I was a girl and a person too. And that was new to me, that I was good enough just the way I was. I didn't even need any money from him, I was ready to go after him. He was English, and I was ready to go after him to England. He was married and had six children but it didn't matter, I would follow him to the middle of nowhere just to get this validation, that I was good enough.

Yulia had two sponsors at the time and more than enough money, but she still found herself going back to the hotel.

I couldn't stay out of that hotel since the guys... the guys went to England, that's where they lived. They sent me money and when I came to England I got my salary, but the validation that I was beautiful and sexy, I didn't get that in the same way when they were gone. So then I went back to the Hotel and made my two/three-thousand per night or whatever it was... It was three-hundred US Dollars for a... to go upstairs. But really, I had so much money in my account, I had stacks of money at home that I didn't even need. The reason why I went there was to get this... a few minutes validation of being beautiful and sexy. You've probably heard it before, that girls don't work for the money, that there's something else there. That's what it was like for me. I told everybody else that I was doing it because I needed the money but really, I just needed to feel like I was good enough. This first second when you meet a client... I mean you're in the hotel, in the bar and you see a potential client, your eyes connect and you know he wants you. With or without money, it doesn't matter, you get this feeling of being chosen. You give him a nod and you go to the restroom so that his friends don't have to see him pick up a girl. Then you meet in the restroom or in the bar and it's these moments, from when your eyes connect until you come to an agreement, that you are looking for. You are chosen. You say - Yes I'll meet with you, it will cost you this much. And he gives you his room number. This is what's worth gold, this very moment.

A - Right.

Y- Then you'll go upstairs and you'll make your money. Sometimes you even have sex that you like, or it was very hard to tell what it was you liked, since you didn't know... you never got to explore that... But if clients were tender and kind of course you could enjoy their company. But then as soon as you got

up there and you had gotten your money and he was done with his business you almost felt angst for doing it... Because it's those first seconds that are worth the money. So then you'll go down and seize those seconds again, and that's how it happens, over and over again.

Yulia made sense of her entry into prostitution as related to her need for validation, "*to be good enough*" just the way she was. She narrated how being chosen, and thereby validated was what made her choose to enter and re-enter prostitution. But as opposed to the sponsor who validated Yulia as "*a girl and a person too*" she was validated primarily as sexy and beautiful. The particular configuration of power relations that patriarchy consists of has produced women as passive objects for male lust. A woman's sexual being is defined through a man desiring her. Yulia's story resonates from that construction, her need for validation was within the patriarchal institution of prostitution reconfigured to the desire to be chosen, to be desired. What she liked sexually remained unexplored, her sexual being was defined through a man desiring her, it was all about 'seizing those seconds'.

Like I stated before I understand agency as existing within the structural conditions of one's life and I am interested in how these conditions produce the subject who acts. On one hand Nadia and Elena made sense of their entry into prostitution as an effect of them being constituted as particular subjects, as 'sexual beings for others'. Their stories spoke of sexualization and sexual abuse as predisposing women for prostitution. They also spoke of patriarchal sexual constructs of sex, women and women's bodies, and of male sexual privilege - male right to female bodies. Yulia, on the other hand, made sense of her entry into prostitution as a result of her need for validation. By entering into the patriarchal institution of prostitution she was validated as beautiful and sexy. As a 'prostitute' she was however positioned as a 'sexual being for others', her sexuality remained unexplored. As opposed to Sonja, Therese, Maria and Rebecca, Nadia, Elena and Yulia did not make sense of their entry into prostitution as an act of resistance but rather as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination.

What do the beginning stories tell us about the dispositif of prostitution?

As I stated in the beginning of the chapter, the term storyworld relays the idea that stories do not only involve sequences of events but also reveal something about the spatio-temporally structured context in which the events are embedded. After having explored the power/resistance of the participants' beginning stories, I end

this section by discussing what these stories might tell us about the dispositif of prostitution, the complex network of discourses, power relations and practices, that created the conditions of possibility for the entry into prostitution and for these stories to emerge.

Even though each beginning story is set in a particular space-time, the situations the participants were in when they entered into prostitution bear resemblances. Far from all of their lives were marked by poverty, however, by the time they entered into prostitution most of them had no educational qualifications, were on low-paid or no jobs, some of them were sick or on sickness benefits or disability pension. Moreover, many of the participants had experiences of being abused, abuse that by some was made sense of as predisposing them to enter into prostitution. The participants' stories speak of intersecting power structures and the inequalities inherent in patriarchal, neo-liberal, capitalist society and how the dispositif of prostitution intersect with the dispositif of gender and other dispositifs of social inequality.<sup>7</sup> I agree with Satz (1995) that gendered inequalities must be part of any plausible explanation of why many women enter into prostitution. Swedish society's ideological standpoint is that prostitution is unworthy of a gender equal welfare state, however Sweden is not gender equal and the welfare state is under deconstruction by neoliberal politics. As Sonja states, there is a fundamental flaw in the system. Society does, on the one hand, condemn prostitution and on the other hand, 'make people enter into it'. Prohibiting the purchase of sexual services does, clearly, not *in itself* alter the inferior economic and social position of women in society and the intersecting social and economic factors which produce the unequal life chances of men and women.

Bernstein asks herself whether the entry into prostitution "*always and inevitably constitutes a further injury to those concerned, or whether it might sometimes (or simultaneously) constitute an attempted means of escape from even more profoundly violating conditions*" (Bernstein, 2007, p. 3). As discussed, most of the participants made sense of their entry into prostitution as both an effect of power and as an attempted means of escape, a line of flight. The territorialisation that the participants attempted to escape was often one of intersecting power structures of class, gender and disability. The desire for freedom, independence or validation, not having to depend on the social services or one particular man to take care of them was often described as what propelled these women into prostitution.

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<sup>7</sup> For a reading of gender as a dispositif see Amigot Leache & Pujal i Llombart, 2011.

Their entry into prostitution could be described as a form of deterritorialization. Other participants did not make sense of the entry into prostitution as a line of flight, an act of resistance, but rather as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination. Their beginning stories spoke of how being constituted as a particular subject, as a ‘sexual being for others’, predisposed them to enter into prostitution.

No matter whether the participants make sense of the entry into prostitution as a line of flight or as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination, entering into prostitution inevitably entailed that they were reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution. While a deterritorialization breaks up an established configuration of power through a line of flight, a reterritorialization refers to the ways in which deterritorialized subjects recombine and enter into new relations of power and resistance. Deleuze and Guattari argue that:

You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organisation that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9).

As you might remember, Sonja, Therese, Maria and Rebecca all, to different degrees, made sense of prostitution as constituting both independence and dependence, or in Maria’s case a means to become both untouchable and touchable. The entry into prostitution was made sense of as something that both enabled and constrained. Being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution did entail entering into new relations of power and resistance.

The beginning stories paint an image of complex relations of power, domination and resistance of the dispositif of prostitution. While some of the beginning stories can be read as stories both about the effects of power and acts of resistance, others speak loudly about the effects of power and domination. As we go deeper into the story world I will continue to explore what the participants’ narratives may tell us about the dispositif of prostitution.

After having explored *what* the participants narrate I now move on to the question of *how* they narrate, or what the participants *do* as they narrate the beginning of their prostitution experience.

## 7.2 Narrating prostitution experience

Exploring the participants' stories about how they came to enter into prostitution raised questions, not only regarding the content of the stories, but also regarding the narration itself, questions regarding the challenges and possibilities of narrating prostitution experience. The first question of the interviews, the question of how one would begin the story of one's prostitution experience, elicited very different responses. While the participants who were still involved in prostitution often began their stories with the particular situation they were in at the time of the entry, the participants who had exited rather began their stories with experiences and events that had constituted them as particular subjects, experiences and events that had predisposed them to enter into prostitution. The different responses raised questions regarding what makes a certain story possible and how the present from which the past is addressed affect the stories that we tell. In this section of the chapter, I therefore proceed to analyze the beginning stories, now from the perspective of what the participants *do* as they narrate their prostitution experience. I introduce three new participants and further draw on the narratives of the participants who have already been introduced.

### Making sense by creating a coherent story

As I stated before, to have a beginning you have to have a story. The stories about beginnings that were narrated in the interviews are part of the participants' narratives about their prostitution experience. These narratives are in their turn part of the participants' larger life stories. Charlotte Linde (1993) argues that making sense of an experience involves constructing a coherent story about that experience, a story that fits into a larger life story. Creating a coherent story is not only a social demand, a demand to make oneself intelligible to others, but could also be seen as a result of an individual desire to make sense of one's life and one's experiences. Linde argues that coherence usually is created in the form of a chain of causality that is neither too thick nor too thin. If a story on the one hand has a too thick chain of causality it could be interpreted as deterministic or fatalist, if a story on the other hand has a too thin chain of causality it could be seen as random, lacking direction.

There is moreover a cultural dimension of coherence (Linde, 1993, p. 18). For a story to be perceived as coherent, to make sense to the narrator as well as the listener, it has to make use of available knowledge. In creating a coherent story about their experiences, the participants drew on different dominant narratives about the entry into prostitution. The way prostitution was made sense of in the

participants' narratives differed. However, their beginning stories all resonated with different dominant narratives, narratives ranging from the entry into prostitution as a gendered survival strategy, to women involved in prostitution as economic entrepreneurs and women being predisposed to prostitution by prior sexualization or sexual abuse. The participants' different ways of making sense of their entry into prostitution, of course, partly conveyed their disparate experiences but the dominant narratives that were drawn upon also worked as structuring principles, making some aspects of one's experience more relevant than others. In some of the stories different structuring principles were mentioned but not used as the primary basis for making sense of the entry into prostitution. In Sonja's story for example entering into prostitution was primarily made sense of as a result of a fundamental flaw in the system and as means to an end, at the same time Sonja referred to her always having "*been open when it comes to sex*", and spoke of prostitution as "*getting paid for a pleasure*". Maria mentioned having been constituted as a particular subject "*capable and accomplished*", as someone who should not rely on the system to be taken care of, but she primarily made sense of her entry into prostitution as conditioned by the particular situation she was in at the time.

The beginning stories were often structured around certain events or the particular situation that made prostitution seem like a viable option. In the research context, coherence is a cooperative achievement of the researcher and the research participant. As some stories unfolded throughout the interview, they deepened and the chain of causality became thicker. As we shall see some of the stories came to grow rich in multiple causality, introducing alternative ways to structure and make sense of the individual's entry into prostitution.

### Endings determine how we understand beginnings

Beginnings are provisional concepts, inherently unstable, typically elusive, and always capable of being rewritten (Richardson, 2008, p. 125).

Creating a coherent story about one's experiences is a continuous endeavour. New experiences, discontinuities and new interpretative possibilities entails that a life story by necessity changes constantly (Linde, 1993). New stories are created, old stories reinterpreted and given new meaning. By narrating experience we interpret the past in stories rather than reproduce it as it was. Riessman argues that "*The 'truths' of narrative accounts are not in their faithful representations of a past world, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present*

*and future*” (Riessman, 2004, p. 35). Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson argue in the same vein that “*The past is not a static repository of experience but always engaged from a present moment, itself ever changing*” (Smith & Watson, 2003, p. 9). The present moment affects our understanding of the past, as the past is composed and recomposed from the present. The subject is in dialogue with her own processes and archive of memory (Smith & Watson, 2003, p. 9). How could we then understand how the different conditions of the participants’ present have impacted the ways they made sense of their entry into prostitution? The present of the participants differed in a number of ways, the most obvious difference was related to whether the women were still involved in prostitution or not. Therese, Yulia, Nadia and Elena had all exited prostitution, they were talking about prostitution in retrospect, they were telling stories about something they had left behind. For Sonja, Maria and Rebecca prostitution was an ongoing process. Their beginning stories had to accommodate their continued involvement in prostitution.

The conditions of Therese’s, Yulia’s, Nadia’s and Elena’s stories were different from the others since they partly were the products of years of self-reflective and therapeutic work. Nadia and Elena were talking in retrospect about their prostitution experience, their stories had quite thick chains of causality. The beginning as well as the rest of their narratives was structured by their understanding of their entry into prostitution as a result of a number of events constituting them as a particular subject, ‘a whore’ and a ‘sexual being for others’. Elena spoke of the chain of events that came to constitute her as a particular subject, as paving the way for her entry into prostitution. What Elena had been constituted to be, was what she became. She had not always made sense of her entry into prostitution in that way though:

A – When I asked you the first question, if you were to tell me about your prostitution experience where would you begin that story, you started with telling me about the time that led up to the sexual harassment and then the rape. If I would have interviewed you when you were seventeen do you think you would have begun the story in the same place then?

E – When I was seventeen? ... No, I think I would have begun it when prostitution began actually. You’re pretty simple minded when you’re a teenager and a beginning is a beginning. I would probably have been able to tell you a lot more about the first client, but it’s also about seeing where it begins and how it’s made possible. I’m not even sure if the rape would have been possible if it

wasn't for the harassment and abuse that had happened before. I'm not sure I would have lacked the ability to tell him no then and there, and that was the problem.

Elena, spoke of 'seeing where it begins' as a process. She had recomposed her story as new events had occurred and as she had acquired new experiences that had altered her understanding of past events. We change our stories as our point of view or our overall understanding changes and reshapes our history (Linde, 1993). Brian Richardson argues that: "*in a coherent system, beginnings lead to endings, and endings determine how we understand beginnings*" (Richardson, 2008, p. 213). In Elena's narrative, exiting prostitution could be interpreted as an ending that with time came to lead to a new understanding of the beginning of her prostitution experience. Simultaneously it could be interpreted as a new understanding of the beginning, leading to her prostitution experience coming to an end.

Making sense of prostitution experience was an ongoing process also for the participants who were still involved in prostitution. Maria's story also had a quite thick chain of causality, at least it appeared so in the beginning of the interview. The chain consisted of the circumstances which made up the particular situation that Maria was in at the point of her entry into prostitution. Her situation had changed since then and was at the time of the interviews very different. Maria was then working full time and no longer depending on prostitution as 'an option to live'. Her continued involvement in prostitution therefore created a demand for a new causality to be created. As the interview proceeded Maria introduced alternative ways to make sense of her prostitution experience. Money was still made central but was made sense of as not only a means to a different end but also as symbolizing security:

It [money] means security. Then I know... someone says – Well you don't really need it you just stack it, you don't really treat yourself to anything. I do think that I treat myself to everything I want though, but I don't waste money, I never did. I know there are some women who are like – Easy come, easy go. And they make ... they get a lot of money and then they spend it, I've never been like that. (...) I had a psychologist who said – Well, you only stack the money, maybe it is a substitute for a sense of security that you lack. It will never be enough, when you have a million in the bank you will think - That's nothing, I need two million in the bank... It's hard to explain these things.

Money is here, drawing on the ‘expert knowledge’ of Maria’s former psychologist, made sense of as symbolizing security and as potentially substituting a lack of it as well. When trying to make sense of her continued involvement in prostitution Maria both draw on her experiences and on different forms of ‘expert knowledge’. In the beginning of our first interview Maria mentioned that many people diagnosed with Borderline end up in the sex industry. When we met for the second interview I asked her if she made that connection in her own life:

A – When we met last you said that many people with Borderline diagnosis end up in the sex industry somehow.

M – Yes.

A – Have you thought about your own experiences as connected to that dimension of your life, or you haven’t made that connection?

M – I think there could be a connection, definitely. I have grown up in a dysfunctional family where there has been abuse of different kinds. Some also argue that it could be a way to process sexual abuse since you’re subjecting yourself to the trauma but also... yes this time I’m in charge, that’s okay, and that’s not okay, and there will be a condom and you can do this but you can’t do that. And I think it could be like that.

Again, drawing on ‘expert knowledge’ that connects the entry into prostitution with prior (sexual) abuse, Maria tried out different ways of making sense of her continued involvement in prostitution. Her story grew rich in multiple causality as different ways to structure the meaning of the entry into prostitution were introduced.

### The emotional and discursive spaces that make a certain story possible

So far I have discussed the social demand and individual desire to create a coherent story about one’s experiences, how the present from which the past is addressed affects the story told and how making sense of prostitution experience is an ongoing process. As stated before, storytelling is a relational practice, for a story to be told there has to be a discursive and emotional space that makes it possible.

The first question in the interviews (*If you were to tell me about your prostitution experience where would you begin that story?*) elicited many different responses. In some interviews it led to stories with thicker chains of causality, stories that at times appeared to be fixed, stories that had been told many times before. Other stories were told for the first time and were more exploratory and had

multiple causalities or thinner chains of causality. Linde (1993) argues that we change a given story for a given addressee as our relationship to that addressee changes. Some participants' stories about the beginning were at first quite short and concise but as the relationship grew through the interviews, the participants revisited the beginning. Jenna was one of them.

Jenna and I got in touch through her escort ad. Jenna is from a working class background, she is in her early twenties and originally from a small town in the south. When we first talked on the phone, she told me what she believed prostitution had afforded her, she lived in a well off neighbourhood, she was taking distance learning classes and was planning for a future career in business. When I asked her to tell me about the beginning of her prostitution experience, Jenna first told me how she was talked into selling sex by her girlfriend. She had moved to a new city to work at a strip club. She eventually got fired and was looking for work when a former colleague suggested that they start to sell sex.

J – It was me and a colleague, this colleague that I went to Malmö with. She started talking about – Why don't we start to sell sex instead? Then we'll make these two-thousand-five-hundred in half an hour instead of in a day. And I was like – No, we can't do that! But she tried to talk me into it by suggesting – Let's do it together then. I ended up seeing a client since she talked me into it. I was talking to her on the phone right before.

So I got on this sex chat and tried by saying something like – Anybody here who knows any good part time job? hint, hint. And I got a reply by this guy who was in nuclear power, he was travelling a lot, he was really wealthy and had a suite at a luxury hotel right in the city centre. He was happy, he really didn't want to meet an escort. He was like – I don't want to see some whore who does it on a regular. But he was like – Oh, it's your first time? Then I would like to see you! It took me about half an hour to even enter the hotel and let him know that I was there. My girlfriend had to try to convince me that everything would be okay.

A – Yes, so what was going through your mind then? What was it that made you stand there for half an hour before you entered?

J – That... this is wrong. What if he's a creep? What if he's mean? And, what if, you know...

A – But then you decided to go in.

J – Yes, I saw him and he looked really nice and there were no problems. He was very calm and he took it easy, he really understood, so that was good. It

was a quite good first experience and I got a kick out of it. I left and I was really happy.

A – What was it that gave you that kick, or what was it that made you happy?

J – Ehm... I was like shit, that's easy money! I was looking at the cash. You know I'm raised real poor and I come from a real low class family and then you see that money and you're like - Shit I could really make some money doing this! And now I live like this (gestures to the apartment).

Jenna's beginning story was at first quite short and concise. She made sense of her entry into prostitution as a response to the particular situation she was in at the time. Prostitution was made sense of as a means to a different end, affording Jenna social and class mobility. After some hours of talking, by the end of our first interview, Jenna returned to the beginning, to a different beginning:

J – When I was fifteen I was groomed by the Alexandra man [online predator]. I guess that's when I lost my self-esteem and started to think it wasn't a big deal to sell sex... but I wanted to get into striptease before that so I don't know if it really mattered. But I got crime victim compensation and that helped me to fix my breasts and move up here.

A – Okay, and that experience, do you relate that to your decision to start selling sex?

J – No. I think that's why it took some months for my girlfriend to talk me into it. I was thinking – No, I've done it before and it was the worst thing I've ever done, never again!

A – I understand. Would you mind telling me what happened?

J – Well, he targeted little girls on the internet, girls who had a rough time at home and then they got a best friend, Alexandra, a twenty-five year old model. She was really beautiful and really nice. She understood you so well, and you were thinking – Shit, and she wants to talk to me!? She was such a beautiful girl, you know. I talked to her for months and that was... I had no friends and I was going through a really rough time at home. She was like – Why don't you go and see this guy, he is great. I sell sex at times and he's my favourite client. He is really hot and you will get money, get to have a really good time, and you'll get away from everything back home. It didn't feel right but she was talking about it for months and then I was like – Okay! I went to see him, and it was awful. He was disgusting, and it all felt really wrong. He was really despicable, there was nothing good about him. I was there all night and I hardly got any money because he thought it was too much with all my crying.

(...)

So when my friend started talking about – Why don't we sell sex? I was like – No, I've done it before, it's horrible, it's really just wrong! She had to try to talk me into it for months and then I was like okay, I guess I'll try it. And then I realized it wasn't that bad. It was really good, he was really nice.

A – Yes, and then you had expected it to be someone really bad.

J – Yes, exactly!

Jenna's experience of being groomed and sexually abused was initially made sense of as contributing to her entry into prostitution "*I guess that's when I lost my self-esteem and started to think it wasn't a big deal to sell sex*". But was then rather made sense of as what made her so reluctant to enter into prostitution. "*I think that's what made it take some months for my girlfriend to talk me into it. I was thinking – No, I've done it before and it was the worst thing I've ever done, never again!*" Jenna was clearly ambivalent regarding how, or even whether, to incorporate this experience as part of her story about her entry into prostitution. It was moreover an experience she had avoided to talk about. When it first happened she did not talk about it to anyone, two years later the Alexandra man case unravelled and the police contacted Jenna. Even though she testified in court she never told anybody else about what had happened, not even her psychologist. That she told me about it by the end of the interview may be understood as a result of us having created the emotional and discursive space that telling a story about a difficult experience demands. That stories might change as relationships change, is a reminder of how the interview context affects narrating prostitution experience.

The discursive and emotional space that makes a certain story possible is not only dependent on the relationship to the person to whom the story is told. A few of the participants spoke of a time when some of the experiences that now constituted their beginning stories could not be told to anyone, not even to themselves. Some of the participants had experienced different forms of traumatic events. Jens Brockmeier defines trauma as a fundamentally overwhelming, incomprehensible and elusive experience, an experience that often resist representation (Brockmeier, 2008, p. 33). That traumatic experience sometimes resists representation was a recurrent theme in the narratives. Elena for example stated that after being subjected to rape she could not talk about it for many years. She said: "*So I buried that event and I couldn't talk about it until... I think I was eighteen when I could verbalize that it had even happened...*" Many traumatic events remain

buried and untold until there is a discursive and emotional space that allows for them to be put into a story. Betty's beginning story is an example of that.

Betty is a charismatic and vibrant woman in her late fifties. We got in touch through her therapist. Betty is from a working class background, she entered into street prostitution when she was in her mid-forties. Betty had struggled with drug addiction since she was in her early teens. A couple of years previous to when we met, after serving a short prison sentence, Betty decided to get help for her addiction and joined Narcotics Anonymous (NA). Joining NA, Betty also exited prostitution. When I asked Betty to tell me about the beginning of her prostitution experience, she told me a story about her childhood that until recently had remained untold.

A – If you would tell me about your experiences of prostitution where would you begin that story?

B – (sighs)

A – It's not an easy question!

B – No it's not... With my self-worth... With my self-worth... I'm rewinding the tape quite a bit now to when I was about seven years old and my step dad's friend... I'm lying there on a mattress and he's touching me, and I like it. Do you know what I mean?

A – Yes.

B – I mean it's icky but I like it, it's some sort of love for the perpetrator. Do you know what I mean?

A – Yes, I do.

B – Yes and my step father did it too, later... I mean this is what I see as the basis for my self-worth, that's what made me feel that prostitution isn't that bad you know.

A – Right.

(...)

B – ...at least he saw me, he would let me sit with him and I got some body contact and I wanted it... I was drawn to it, I can see it today I mean. But it was very painful to admit it to myself, it still makes me feel a little queasy.

A – I understand... and during all these years you never talked about it?

B – No it's not until this January/February when I was at this co-dependency/relatives week. Or it really started because I was doing an internship at an institution for young girls and when they were sharing they were talking about these kind of things and I was like – That happened to me too, I guess you can talk about it then. Do you know what I mean?

A – Yes...

B – And then we had this week after, about co-dependency, and I tried opening up there... I had enough sense to dare to feel something then. I dared to fall apart and I promise you, that angst and that pain... it wasn't tears... When I looked at myself in the mirror I didn't recognize myself, I felt all... (gestures that her face is distorted).

A – Distorted?

B – Yes, I looked really strange and I thought to myself, is that me?

A – Yes.

B – And I had these chest pains, this pressure and you feel sick and all of that you know... It lasted for three or four days and then I've been working with this all spring...

Betty did not talk about her experiences of sexual abuse for over forty years. Recovering from drug addiction in rehabilitation, she was in a place in which she had both the emotional and discursive space to tell her story, a space in which she could allow herself to “*dare to feel something*”, “*dare to fall apart*”. Allan Young who has worked on post-traumatic stress disorder argues that narrating traumatic experience entails re-experiencing the past (Andrews, 2010, p. 156). Articulating the traumatic events of her childhood caused Betty great pain, the past was re-experienced in the present. Brockmeier argues that the traumatic gap between language and experience not only reflects a rupture in the ability to represent experience but also reveals a rupture in ones being in the world (Brockmeier, 2008, p. 34). Betty stated that she had been “*working with this all spring*”, in therapy she had been working with coping, understanding and possibly coming to terms with chaotic and inarticulate experiences, storying her experience.

### Counter-narratives as technologies of resistance

As I stated in the first section of the chapter I am interested in the power/resistance of the beginning stories. I have previously discussed how the participants made sense of their entry into prostitution as both an effect of power and/or domination and as an act of resistance. I end this chapter with further exploring the power/resistance of the beginning stories by turning to a discussion on how narrating prostitution experience, in itself, could be seen as an act of resistance.

With a Foucauldian understanding of power as productive, narratives are seen as technologies of power as well as technologies of the self, the subject is seen as socially constructed in discursive practices but also able to reflect on and resist

the very discursive relations that constitute it (Tamboukou, 2008a, p. 107). In analyzing personal narratives about prostitution I find the idea of the discursive positioning of selves useful. Bronwyn Davies & Rom Harré understand the subject as emerging through the processes of social interaction “*not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate*” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 46). They understand who one is as an open question with a shifting answer depending on the positions that are made available through one’s own and others discursive practices. When entering into prostitution the participants were reterritorialized as ‘prostitutes’. As discussed in Chapter Five, ‘the prostitute’ is ascribed different meanings in different discourses. While some of these discourses emerge as dominant, others are marginalized.

I perceive the participants’ selves as both entangled with and positioned against ‘the prostitute’. The conflicting relationship between the self and ‘the prostitute’ becomes exceedingly explicit in the first part of Sara’s beginning story.

Sara is in her mid-twenties, she lives in a small town in the south, she is from a middle class background. We got in touch through her escort ad and when we met for our first interview Sara told me that she had been selling sex as an escort for the last five years. She was at that time depending on prostitution to make a living but she had plans on going back to school. When I asked Sara where she would begin her story about her experiences of selling sex she said:

S – (Sighs) Well it’s hard to say because it is very complex, it is very... I have heard a lot in debates that all sex sellers have been sexually abused as children, and that’s not what it’s been like for me. Rather I’ve had... yes, I’ve had a good childhood... Ehm... a stable family, ideal, idyllic in many ways. Then as a person I’m... eh... I’ve had a lot of problems with myself. I’ve had depressions, I’ve had angst, I’ve been on meds, I’ve been in therapy, so in that sense I guess I somehow fit the stereotype. But even then... What I would like to say first is that even if I sometimes feel bad and then in many ways, I can’t directly relate it to me selling sex. I don’t feel bad because I’m selling sex, I feel bad because of other things. Selling sex is easy to me. I don’t have any problems with it, maybe it sounds strange but that’s why I’ve done it for this long, because... I don’t have any problems with it.

Sara began her story with positioning herself in relation to a dominant narrative about ‘the prostitute’. She positioned herself against ideas of ‘the prostitute’ as

a victim of sexual abuse, unstable family conditions and a troubled childhood. At the same time she made connections between herself and ideas about 'the prostitute' as someone suffering from mental ill health, even though she did not attribute this to her prostitution experience. Tore et al. state that "*critical stories are always and at once in tension with dominant stories, neither fully oppositional nor untouched*" (as cited in Bamberg & Andrews, 2004, p. 53). This seems to be true for Sara's story, as it both draws on dominant narratives about 'the prostitute' and constitutes a counter-narrative.

Molly Andrews theorizes counter-narratives as "*the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly to dominant cultural narratives*" (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004, p. 1). Similar to Sara, many of the participants narrated their prostitution experience both drawing on and countering dominant narratives. While most of the participants narrated their experiences implicitly or explicitly refuting different narratives about 'the prostitute', not every dominant narrative was equally relevant to everyone. While the idea of dominant narratives or master narratives is relatively uncontested within narrative research, the establishment of any one dominant narrative is far from uncomplicated (Jones, 2004, p. 172). Like I stated in Chapter Five, even though discourses on prostitution as 'a form of patriarchal oppression' and the construction of 'the prostitute' as a victim in need of protection have been institutionalized in Sweden there is a polyvalence of discourses on prostitution, discourses overlap and interact. In analyzing the participants' stories it became clear that different narratives are related to as dominant in different stories/lives.

Considering the beginning stories, in themselves, as technologies of resistance, multiple counter-narratives appear. While Nadia and Elena constructed counter-narratives challenging the idea of 'the whore' as an undeserving victim, Sonja's, Maria's and Rebecca's beginning stories could be read as counter-narratives to 'the prostitute' as a 'passive body' and 'passive victim'.

As I stated before, exercising resistance despite being dependent on prostitution to make a living was a central theme in Sonja's narrative. Regardless of the fact that Sonja spoke of being forced to choose to enter into prostitution, she did, throughout her narrative, position herself as empowered and in control. She clearly positioned herself against the narrative about 'the prostitute' as a passive victim. When I asked her how come she chose to participate in the study she said:

S – Honestly it was pretty much based on that I had met you before... ehm... and I think it would be quite good if a more nuanced image could emerge. Not always this image of victims. Of course there are victims as well but I don't believe it to be the overall truth... I mean there are many highly educated girls and... The most prevalent image is pretty much that women do this because they don't have any other choice. For some, for different reasons, that is the case, but not for all. I think that there are significantly more nuances than what people in general think there are.

A – But you personally wouldn't have chosen this if it wasn't for the particular situation that you were in?

S – No, I wouldn't. I was put in a situation that I just had to solve.

While Sonja made sense of the particular situation she was in when entering into prostitution as giving her no other choice, she also stated that she wanted to challenge the idea that women in prostitution are victims without any other choices. This might appear as a mere contradiction but taking into consideration neo-liberal technologies of power, Sonja's story becomes less contradictory.

Nikolas Rose (1996) writes about how neo-liberal technologies of power, centred on the idea of the autonomous subject, create new dividing practices within and between subjects. The discourse of 'responsible self-advancement' depoliticises and individualises any social problem. The excluded or marginalized are constructed as either deliberately choosing not to exercise such responsibility or as incapable of doing so due to inability or ignorance. 'Victim' and 'agent' are in this discourse constructed as a binary opposition. In neo-liberal discourse, victimhood is treated as an identity, 'the victim' is constructed as passive, disempowered, weak and dependent (Cole, 2006, p. 3). With this logic, to be a 'victim' is to lack agency (Carpenter, 2002, p. 131). Rose argues that the language of autonomy, identity, self-realisation and the search for fulfilment constitutes a grid of 'regulatory ideals' that traverses society on all levels. Even though to be victimized, whether through systemic inequalities or interpersonal actions, and being an agent is by no means mutually exclusive, Sonja risked, by being reterritorialized as 'prostitute', being constructed as passive, disempowered, weak and dependent. Neo-liberal discourse on the victim as an identity category here interacts with radical feminist discourse on 'the prostitute as a 'victim in need of protection'. By positioning herself against the idea of 'the prostitute' as 'victim' she challenged her status as Other imposed on her by neo-liberal dividing practices. Many of the participants strongly positioned themselves against the idea of them as 'victims'. As O'Connell Davidson points out, women involved

in prostitution inhabit the same symbolic realm as other members of society, their experiences and their stories about these experiences are informed by the same ‘political fictions’ about human freedom, coercion, consent, victimhood, et cetera, as everyone else (O’Connell Davidson, 1998, p. 115). In that sense the dispositif of prostitution intersect with the dispositif of neo-liberal governance.

Besides being made coherent by chains of causality, stories are also made coherent by their moral evaluations. Stories offer us moral evaluations on the way things are, the way things ought to be, and most importantly the kind of person the narrator claims to be (Linde, 1993). Sonja’s narrative entailed a moral evaluation on the way things are – there is a fundamental flaw in the system, society on the one hand condemns prostitution on the other hand make people enter into it. It also entailed a moral evaluation on the kind of person that Sonja claimed to be. The self that emerged through her story was a capable, controlled and rational self. There were parts of the story where other themes emerged, themes as loss of control and vulnerability. When I asked Sonja questions in relation to any of these themes she often avoided to answer or steered the conversation back to the main themes of her story. Linde claims that *“moral evaluation, particularly of the character of the speaker, is among the most powerful tools we have for understanding what speakers do as they construct their narratives and what is at stake for them in narrating parts of their life story”* (Linde, 1993, p 81). What seemed to be at stake for Sonja narrating her prostitution experience was to create a story through which she could untangle herself from the story about ‘the prostitute’ as passive, disempowered, weak and dependent. The importance of not being perceived as weak and dependent has more than one layer of meaning in Sonja’s narrative. Being perceived as passive, disempowered, weak and dependent in prostitution can lead to further victimisation. This is a recurrent theme in the narratives and something that I will return to in Chapter Nine.

Elena and Nadia both, in their beginning stories, drew on the dominant narrative which connects sexualization, sexual abuse and prostitution. At the same time they implicitly resisted the narrative about ‘the whore’ as an undeserving victim by narrating the events that had constituted them as ‘sexual beings for others’. Elena was for example critical of how adults participated in blaming her for the sexual harassment she was subjected to in school. While Elena’s beginning story as a whole, could be read as a counter-narrative to the narrative of ‘the whore’ as an undeserving victim, there were moments during the interviews in which she still blamed herself for being raped. Neill Korobov argues that resistance at times takes the shape of a joint endeavour, conversationally worked up (Korobov, 2004,

p. 194). When Elena spoke of her decision to go with the man that later raped her as a stupid decision, resistance became a joint endeavour as I questioned whether it was reasonable to expect a fourteen year old girl (or any girl or woman for that sake) to predict and prevent a rape.

E – ... so I thought I'll go with him and explain that I don't want to have sex. That's of course stupid because that's when he attacks me... So...

A – Well, you were fourteen years old, I mean how are you supposed to predict something like that when you're fourteen years old?

E – No you don't! (...)

A few minutes later Elena returned once again to the issue of who's to blame for the rape and once again I intervened:

E – It's hard not to blame yourself, you're both perpetrator and victim because you ask yourself – Wasn't there anything you could have done differently? And yes of course there were a lot of things I could have done to prevent what lead up to that situation! Once you're there you're screwed. That's how it is...

A – Yes, but at the same time... I understand those thoughts and I imagine they are hard to avoid but at the same time it's pretty hard to break that chain of events especially when you're that young...

E – Yes, exactly! All these people who I by the way think... it makes me want to throw up... There was a girl that was attacked in, I think it was Örebro. Then she comes out and says... because she pulled herself together and used her karate skills and fought the guy off. So she comes out and the headline reads 'Girls are too wimpy, we have to learn to fight back'. Paralyzed with fear is probably more common.

A – Yes!

E – Because there's a kind of 'Hollywood rape' and then there's a real rape, or a real rape, I mean a rape that's like most rapes. It's an assault on the soul and the body. It's not like – I'll beat you in the head with a rock until you're unconscious to get what I want. You don't have to because the person is already so violated that... Yeah, it makes me so tired! Especially when it's girls going around saying stuff like that – You have to toughen up! Yes, so is it our responsibility not to be raped then? It's not, and I won't assume that responsibility either!

Women (and girls) subjected to rape are routinely divided into deserving and undeserving victims depending on their sexual behaviour/reputation. Even though Elena's narrative as a whole was a counter-narrative to the narrative about 'the whore' as an undeserving victim, she still struggled with feelings of

guilt. In the above extract I intervened in Elena's story and resistance became a joint endeavour. Elena began with stating that it was hard not to blame herself, that there were things she could have done differently. After I intervened and questioned whether it was reasonable that she put the blame on herself, she told a story that was concluded with her stating that she refused to assume responsibility for being raped. What was at stake for Elena in narrating her story seemed to be to untangle herself from the idea of her as unworthy and an undeserving victim.

I like to think of the participants' narratives as technologies of resistance, through their narratives they resist stigmatizing and reductive representations. There is however a tension between the participants' stories and dominant narratives about prostitution and 'the prostitute', the stories are both entangled with and positioned against these narratives. Analyzing the participants' stories, it became clear that different narratives are related to as dominant in different stories/lives. As will be explored in the subsequent chapters the participants moreover embraced multiple perspectives and interpretations, and drew on and countered different narratives at different points. The way the participants positioned themselves in accounting their experience was fluid, dynamic and flexible.

### **7.3 Concluding remarks**

In this chapter I have engaged with the participants' stories about the beginning of their prostitution experience. I have explored both how the participants made sense of their entry into prostitution and what the challenges and possibilities of narrating prostitution experience are. I have discussed the power/resistance connections in the beginning stories and what these stories might tell us about the dispositif of prostitution, as well as different aspects of narrating prostitution experience such as: making sense by creating a coherent story, how endings determine how we understand beginnings, the discursive and emotional spaces that make a certain story possible, and, counter-narratives as technologies of resistance. As discussed in Chapter Five, genealogy entails an exploration of descent rather than origins. According to Foucault things do not have an origin or a definite beginning, but rather multiple beginnings. In analyzing the participants' beginning stories, the theme of multiple beginnings emerged. While some participants narrated their experience in a chronological sequence others returned to the beginning many times, yet others narrated how old beginning stories had been reinterpreted and given new meaning. Making sense of experience is a continuous endeavor, new experiences and new interpretative possibilities entail that a life story by necessity changes constantly. The significance given to

particular events shifts as we make new connections and reposition ourselves and others within our life stories. I do not understand the beginnings that the participants narrated as ‘definite beginnings’ rather as attempts to make sense of experience and to narrate themselves as ethical subjects.

In the analysis of the beginning stories, themes emerged that will be central to the continued exploration of the participants’ story world. I will briefly return to these themes before I move onto the next chapter.

As concluded in the first section of the chapter, the dispositif of prostitution consists of both relations of power and states of domination. Some participants made sense of their entry into prostitution as both an effect of power and as an act of resistance. These participants’ stories spoke of how power relations and forces of desire connect in creating conditions of possibility for resistance. Treating the entry into prostitution as an effect of power relations and forces of desire requires acknowledging both the particular relations of power and domination that constituted the territorialization that the participants attempted to escape and their desire to become other, ‘become independent’, ‘become their own’, ‘become untouchable’, as what propelled them into prostitution. Other participants primarily spoke of the entry into prostitution as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination. The entry into prostitution did not mark a rupture in their life stories, it was rather spoken of as a continuity. Experiences of sexualization and sexual abuse had constituted them as ‘sexual beings for others’, the entry into prostitution further confirmed this status. As we shall see in the following chapters, no matter how the participants made sense of their entries, entering into prostitution entailed entering into new relations of power/resistance. The intersection of the dispositif of prostitution with the dispositif of gender and other dispositifs of social inequality at certain times and in certain situations, produces states of domination. Even though options are more limited in states of domination, resistance is still possible (McLaren, 2002, p. 221). As we go deeper into the story world, I will continue to explore the relations of power and domination of the dispositif of prostitution as well as the multitude of tactics to negotiate, resist and destabilize power that the participants narrate about.

As has also been illustrated by the beginning stories, prostitution is structured by a multiplicity of interconnected discourses. In Chapter Five, I discussed how the discourse on prostitution as ‘a form of patriarchal oppression’ and the construction

of 'the prostitute' as a 'victim in need of protection', was institutionalized in Sweden. However, there is a polyvalence of discourses on prostitution. Discourses overlap and interact, there are echoes from the past that resonate in the present. In the beginning stories, different discourses emerged, discourses on: the entry into prostitution as a gendered survival strategy, the entry into prostitution as a means to become (in)dependent or (un)touchable, and women being predisposed to prostitution by prior sexualization or sexual abuse. In the second section of the chapter I discussed how different discourses, or different narratives about 'the prostitute' were related to as dominant in different stories/lives and how the participants created counter-narratives to dominant narratives. Narratives about 'the prostitute' as 'passive body, passive victim', produced counter-narratives in which women involved in prostitution positioned themselves as empowered and in control, narratives about 'the prostitute' as unchaste woman and undeserving victim produced counter-narratives of women involved in prostitution as sexually victimized and deserving victims. In this process dominant narratives and counter-narratives interacted. I also illustrated how discourses on prostitution interact with other discourses such as the neo-liberal discourse on the victim as an identity category and the patriarchal discourse on women as passive objects for male lust. Drawing on Tamboukou's work on a genealogical approach to narrative analysis I treat narratives as both technologies of power and technologies of the self. An understanding of narratives as both technologies of the self and technologies of power stipulates that although subjects live and construct stories about themselves, these stories also live and construct subjects. The participants are both the object and the subject of discourse. As women involved in prostitution, the participants are constructed as 'prostitutes' and thereby become entangled in discourses on prostitution. At the same time the narration of their prostitution experience entails a form of self-construction, a process in which participants define and produce their own ethical self-understanding in relation to their prostitution experience. In the subsequent chapters, I will continue to explore the polyvalence of interconnected discourses and practices of the dispositif of prostitution as well as how the participants 'talk back' to the cultural narratives that have scripted them as particular kinds of subjects, and how this talking back, this changing of the terms of one's representation, could be understood as a tactic for gaining agency, a technology of resistance.



## 8. THE SPATIALITY OF PROSTITUTION EXPERIENCE

As stated in the previous chapter, whether the participants made sense of the entry into prostitution as a line of flight or as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination, entering into prostitution inevitably entailed being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution, and thereby entering into new relations of power/resistance. While some participants entered into street prostitution, the majority were introduced to prostitution through escort forums/websites, what I refer to as ‘online spaces of prostitution’. As stated before, the dispositif of prostitution consists of a complex network of discourses, power relations and practices. In this chapter I will further explore the dispositif by engaging with the participants’ narratives about the meaning and significance of space to the prostitution experience and in the constitution of the self.

Space/place configurations are central in the dispositif of prostitution. Spatially located materialities such as legislative framework, market segment, and prostitution sector give shape to prostitution and produce highly contextualized experiences. As discussed in Chapter One, the need to contextualize prostitution experience has become a frequently discussed topic within prostitution research. Weitzer (2005a, 2005b, 2010), amongst many others, conclude that the stratification of the prostitution market is strongly correlated with the space in which prostitution takes place. Street prostitution constitutes the most visible and contentious form of prostitution. In contemporary Western society, a hierarchical distinction is often made between persons involved in indoor prostitution, working from massage parlors or as escorts, and persons involved in street prostitution, who solicit for clients in public space. Ideas about the status of persons with experience of prostitution, produced and reproduced through discourses, representations and practices, are articulated differently across space (Hubbard, 1998).

Even though space, in the form of prostitution sector, is taken into account when studying prostitution experience, space is in prostitution research often treated as geographical location, as a stage/scene on which the prostitution activity takes place. Geographer Philip Hubbard who has written extensively on the management of street prostitution argues that few prostitution scholars have discussed the intersection of space and identity and how “*the imaging (and imagining)*” of specific spaces associated with prostitution produce and reproduce ‘the prostitute’ as Other (Hubbard, 1998, p. 55-56).

A genealogical approach to narratives includes attentiveness to ‘the spatiality of power’ (Tamboukou, 2003a, p. 53). Foucault’s work contains the idea of power as control over space and bodies through regulation and supervision and reveals the relationship between power, knowledge and space. Foucault was critical of the notion of space as something ‘dead, fixed, undialectical and immobile’ (Foucault, 1980a, p. 70). Social practices take place in particular spaces, however, these spaces and the practices therein have to be recognized as socially constructed over time. For Foucault, the practices in space are instrumental in the production of particular subjectivities. Foucault’s theoretical work on how the subject emerges is thus highly spatialized.

Foucault’s challenge to take space seriously, to not treat it as ‘dead, fixed, undialectical and immobile’ is central to the scholarship of Critical Geography. A Critical Geography approach troubles simplistic notions of space. Doreen Massey, one of the front figures of Critical Geography, argues in her seminal article *Politics and spacetime*, that while there is a multiplicity of uses and meanings of the term space, there is one view which appears particularly frequently - the view of space as stasis and as entirely opposed to time (Massey, 1992). Massey is critical of such an understanding. In the same vein as Foucault, she relates the spatial to the social and to power. She urges us to think of space not as “*some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations: that what is at issue is not social phenomena in space but both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations, that the spatial is social relations stretched out*” (Massey, 1994, p. 2). Massey argues that space must be conceptualized integrally with time. Space-time is a configuration of social relations. Social relations are never still and are inevitably infused with power and meaning and symbolism. The spatial is thus an “*ever shifting social geometry of power and signification*” (Massey, 1994, p. 3).

With an understanding of space as ever shifting and constructed out of social relations, I will in this chapter, using tools provided by Foucault's idea of the spatialization of the subject, Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy and insights from critical geography, explore the participants' stories about the meaning and significance of space to the prostitution experience and in the constitution of the self. The spatial experiences of prostitution can indeed vary immensely, from place to place and from person to person, the focus of my analysis is how space *shapes* but also *is shaped* in the prostitution experience. The basic premise is that there is a definite relation between the kind of space the subject occupies and the form the subject takes.

In the first section of the chapter, I will discuss the notion of 'the prostitute' as 'public woman' and how this notion resonates in the participants' narratives. I will explore how the street space is constructed as a 'dangerous place' in the indoor participants' narratives, how this construction is contested in the narratives of the women with experience of street level prostitution and how the street space emerge as central to the othering of women involved in prostitution as the indoor participants position themselves against ideas of 'the (street) prostitute'.

In the second section of the chapter, I will discuss recent reconfigurations of the public/private in the dispositif of prostitution, what Bernstein has termed as 'the privatization of public women'. I will explore the deterritorialization of prostitution from the street space, and the participants' narratives about online spaces of prostitution, as well as the new meaning and new practices of prostitution that have emerged in these new spaces. This chapter will also serve as a further introduction to the organisation of the Swedish prostitution market.

### **8.1 The idea of 'the prostitute' as 'public woman'**

Massey argues that the spatial organization of society is integral to the production of the social, and not merely its result (Massey, 1994, p. 4). The construction of spatial boundaries and the ordering of bodies in space has functioned as a fundamental means of making people conform to dominant norms and practices (Hubbard, 1998, p. 57). Women and men have historically been located differently within the public and private sphere. As discussed in Chapter Five, the public/private dichotomy of liberal thought located women in the private, domestic sphere and men in the public sphere. In the nineteenth century the expansion of wage labor brought new symbolic boundaries between public and private space. Work was constructed as an autonomous, rationalized and masculine sphere of economic

activity outside the home (Bondi & Domosh, 1998, p. 270). This construction divided women along class lines. While bourgeoisie women were constrained to the private space of the home, many working class women were present in the public space where they worked as wage laborers. Public space was both gendered and classed and norms regarding respectable femininity ordered female bodies in space. Women's presence in the masculine public space caused social anxiety and was allowed only under prescribed regulation (Bondi & Domosh, 1998, p. 270). Bourgeoisie women were only allowed to venture out of the private space that they had been confined to if they adhered to norms regarding appropriate feminine behavior. Being in the wrong place, or in a place at the wrong time entailed the risk of jeopardizing their middle class, feminine identity.

While bourgeoisie women were constructed as private there was a parallel construction of 'the public woman' as 'the prostitute'. 'The prostitute' served as a representation of "*the immoral margin*", crucial for defining "*the moral centre*" (Hubbard, 1998, p. 58). 'The prostitute' was symbolically important in defining the nature of public and private space and the appropriateness and inappropriateness of certain sexual behaviours in certain places (Hubbard, 1999, p. 7). Hubbard writes about how as sexuality was domesticized in monogamous, procreative relationships, 'the prostitute' was, in spatialized discourse, placed outside 'femininity', in opposition to the moral values and landscape of heteronormality. The boundary between "*domesticized femininity and the unfettered sexuality of the street*" was produced and policed through the construction of 'the prostitute' as deviant and dangerous, a threat to bourgeois society (Hubbard, 1998, p. 58)

Space was central to the process of othering women involved in prostitution. Prostitution was used as a general metaphor for the disorder and the immorality of urban space. The discourse of 'the prostitute' as dirty and dangerous was spatially transposed onto city streets (Hubbard, 1998, p. 59). When debating prostitution, themes of sexual immorality, danger, degradation, criminality and disease were dominant. Hubbard contends that although contemporary discourse is more likely to depict prostitution as a social problem than as a social threat, many of these themes persist (Hubbard, 1997, p. 134). In contemporary prostitution discourses, there are echoes from the past. (Street) prostitution is still associated with sexual immorality, danger, degradation and disease. And 'the prostitute' is still first and foremost constructed as a 'public woman', a 'woman of the street'. Despite the fact that most prostitution in contemporary western society takes place indoors most of the imagery of prostitution is tied to

the street space: women leaning into cars, standing on street corners, soliciting in dodgy back streets and dimly lit alleys. The placement of ‘prostitutes’ in space clearly does much to inform conceptions and constructions of the status of women involved in prostitution. The othering of women involved in prostitution is tied to space.

The construction of women involved in prostitution as ‘public women’ resonates in the narratives of the participants. Many of the participants who do not have experience of street prostitution narrate their experience and themselves in opposition to ‘the (street) prostitute.’ Yulia had experience of both hotel prostitution and street prostitution, in her narrative she reflected on space in relation to her prostitution experience.

As Yulia’s beginning story relayed, Yulia first entered into prostitution when she was sixteen, selling sex from an upscale hotel in Moscow. When Yulia was in her early twenties she migrated to Sweden where she later met and married a Swedish man. Shortly after her arrival to Sweden her husband took her passport and forced her to enter into street prostitution. Yulia narrated that it was not until recently that she had realized that her first experience of prostitution actually took place in Moscow and not, like she used to think, in the streets of Stockholm. When I asked Yulia how come she did not until recently think of her experiences of sex for money in Moscow as part of her prostitution experience, she answered:

I was very influenced by my surroundings and the social acceptance, how it was seen and interpreted, and working the streets is not the same thing... even until today I feel like there is a huge difference there... I mean between women who work in the streets and women who work in a hotel or a brothel... I am reading a book now by a French author describing her prostitution experiences from a brothel... it is much more sheltered, you don’t put yourself in as much danger. In the streets it is much rougher and more dangerous, you need another approach and mind-set to survive on the streets. And then of course it is considered much lower to work on the street, so it is also about acceptance. I think that the milieu makes you respected, or you were respected because you could make that much money I mean if you disregard your emotions it was easy to work in a hotel, you didn’t have to be in a dangerous environment, the rewards were greater and you felt like you were on a completely different level than the women working the streets. Yes we were prostitutes but we were elite prostitutes and that was cool. The women who worked the streets... we had women who worked in the streets of Moscow too, when we drove by them

I thought of them as nobodies. It's ridiculous when I think about it because they were women with the same experiences and the same needs as us and we passed them by saying – Who are you? You are nobody!

Yulia's story of her Moscow experiences of commercial sex is entangled with her experience of becoming an adult in early post-soviet Russia and conditioned by what she described as the ruthlessness of the new market economy and the disintegration of the Soviet society. Yulia spoke of how sex for foreign currency was both sensationalized and normalized in Russia during this time. Having a 'sponsor', often a foreign business man and encounters with him and other clients at upscale hotels equated a high social status. The spatial theme in Yulia's narrative addresses the issue of the construction of meaning(s) of actions in relation to where these actions take place. The hotel/brothel was in Yulia's narrative constructed in opposition to the 'dangerous' and 'rough' street space. Moreover, Yulia narrated how she constructed herself in relation to the (no) bodies in the street – yes, she was a 'prostitute' but she was an 'elite prostitute'. Space, here, does not only define actions, but also the subject acting. The subject is ascribed different meaning depending on how she is located in space.

Even though Yulia in retrospect was critical of her distancing stance towards the women she used to drive by in the streets of Moscow, "*they were women with the same experiences and the same needs as us*", she still considered that there was "*a huge difference*" between outdoor and indoor prostitution. Apart from that Yulia considered street prostitution more dangerous she mentioned that it is also considered "*lower*" and "*less accepted*". Yulia's narrative raises two themes that are recurrent in the indoor participants' narratives: the imagining of the street as a dangerous place and the positioning of the self against 'the (street) prostitute', these themes will be addressed in what follows.

### Imagining the street as a dangerous place

Street prostitution is in Sweden, as in most other western countries, a marginal fraction of the sex industry. Despite its successive decline, street prostitution still occupies a central position in the imagery of prostitution. Very few of the participants who were or had been involved in indoor prostitution had any personal experience of street prostitution or knew of anybody who had. Most of them still had clear images of the street space and imagined the street as a dangerous place. In their narratives, street prostitution was often associated with grittiness, dirt and danger, ideas that are prevalent in popular imagination.

Maya is in her early twenties and comes from a middle class background. When we got in touch through her escort ad, Maya had been selling sex for some months. She was introduced to prostitution by a girlfriend who had sold sex via the internet for some years. When I first talked to Maya over the phone she told me that she wondered a lot about other women's experiences of prostitution, what it was like for other women, women who were victims of human trafficking, women who worked the street. In the interview I asked Maya about her thoughts on street prostitution, she said:

I think... it feels... it feels dirty somehow. Maybe it's because I haven't been introduced to it but it feels like the men... On the internet they can choose me out of many, many girls, you feel a little chosen you know and then you can choose from the ones that have chosen you. While in the street it feels more... I don't know... cheap or dirty in some way... But I don't know, I haven't been there, maybe it's not that bad. But I feel like it's more prostitutes who need money for drugs...

Maya admitted not knowing anything about the street prostitution sector, but she still constructed 'internet prostitution' in opposition to her image of the street space. On the internet you are 'chosen' and can 'choose', street prostitution she thought "*feels dirty and cheap*". Maya constructed the street as a space marked with drug addiction and lack of choice.

While Maya drew on stigmatory ideas of (street)prostitution as dirty and cheap, in constructing the street as a dangerous place, Maria relayed concerns that have been raised which stipulate that the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services has made women in street prostitution more vulnerable than before the law was enacted. When I asked her how/in which way she thought they were more vulnerable, she said:

... Well I think many of the clients are a little jumpy and scared since it's illegal. It has become... I mean the law we have prohibiting the purchase of sexual services has made it harder for the women in the street. Before they could lean into the car and when they were negotiating the price they could assess the person: does he seem alright, stable, sober, not drug addicted? Are there any weapons in the car, is there more than one man in the car? Today they don't have the time. They just jump into the car and go to a parking lot and then the negotiation takes place there and then you can figure out yourself that if you don't get along then maybe...

While Maria imagined that the street space had become more dangerous after the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services, she also reflected on whether indoor prostitution in the form of outcall escort services was any safer:

On the other hand, if I go to someone's place or if I'm in a hotel, what kind of security does that give me? Well I guess I could run outside and there would be people there... In a car you're pretty isolated. It's you and... And if you do what I do before, talk on the phone, it gives you more time to form an opinion and pull out if it doesn't feel right, I think. But when you think of it, at times I have... there are those who live in the country side, farmers. I remember one guy, he had chickens. And well, he could have locked me up out there. I mean he *could* have. So yes at times I think that at some point it might end up real bad...

While Maria began to speak of the vulnerability of women involved in street prostitution, imagining the street as an even more dangerous place after the enactment of the law, she ended with reflecting on the vulnerability that outcall services entailed, on questioning what kind of security it gave her.

One may argue that the participants' construction of the street as a dangerous place expresses an accurate assessment of the risk of street prostitution. There is a body of prostitution research indicating that persons involved in street prostitution generally are subjected to more physical violence than persons involved in indoor prostitution (Church et. al, 2001; Lowman & Fraser, 1995). With an understanding of sexual subjectivity as spatially constituted, the violence 'street prostitutes' are subjected to can partly be attributed to them failing to conform to the moral order immanent in space. However, even though street level prostitution generally entails greater risks of physical violence, creating a binary opposition in which outdoor prostitution is constructed as dangerous and indoor prostitution is constructed as safe, disregards the fact that indoor and outdoor prostitution take very different forms in different national and regional contexts. In that sense, the suggestion that indoor prostitution is inherently less dangerous than street prostitution is highly debatable and depends on a variety of factors (Hubbard, 1999, p. 26). In Sweden, women involved in indoor prostitution are, like Maria, mostly operating as 'independent escorts' working alone in the confinement of hotel rooms or their own or clients' private homes, not from brothels or massage parlours. The Pandering law, which prohibits pimping or procuring, prevents landlords from leasing apartments to tenants for the use of prostitution, as this would be considered 'promoting or improperly financially

exploiting' a persons' involvement in prostitution. In order to prevent the use of apartments for prostitution, there are several provisions for criminal sanctions and confiscation detailed in the Penal code, the Land code and the Condominium act (The Penal Code Chapter 6 § 12.2, The Land Code (1970:994) Chapter 12. § 42.1.9, The Condominium Act (1991:614) Chapter 7. § 18.8 (2003:31). The overall implication of these laws is that it is illegal to operate a brothel or lease an apartment or a room for the purposes of prostitution (Dodillet & Östergren, 2011). As women mostly operate as independent escorts, the physical protection that working in an environment with others entails is lacking. While the practices of prostitution vary significantly across space, this is not only related to whether prostitution takes place indoors or outdoors but to a number of factors including the legislation and regulation of prostitution. As Maria's narrative suggested, outcall prostitution similarly to street prostitution involves high risk.

Tamboukou argues that social relations of space are lived, experienced and interpreted differently by those inhabiting different positions in the multiplicity of its levels (Tamboukou, 2003a, p. 55). Rather than conceptualizing place as a monolithic entity, different mental and lived spaces can be produced within the same geographical place. In agreeance with this, the five participants who had experience of street prostitution did not construct the street as a monolithic space, as a 'dangerous place', but rather as a space that shifted and altered with time and one's position in it.

Veronika is an outgoing and talkative woman in her late fifties, she comes from a middle class background. As stated before, me and Veronika had met before, when I worked at the Prostitution Unit. Veronika contacted me after finding out about the study from another research participant. When we met for our interviews it had been about twenty years since Veronika first entered into prostitution, she was at that time in a financially difficult situation which had put her company at stake. Veronika initially sold sex from the street. When I asked her how she perceived the street space when she first started out she said:

There were all kinds of people there, it was very interesting, exciting. It could be unpleasant too, it varied from hour to hour depending on which people were around. But I can honestly say that there was no other place in the city where you could feel as safe late at night. There were so many eyes there, curious people, venues that were open, the clubs and the restaurants, people who were curious and other people who were just passing by... You never had

to risk anything happening not until after the last tram or bus had left, then the ordinary people were gone and the ordinary clients as well, the later at night the worse the clients. The nicest clients used to come between eight and eleven and then the later it got... When it was all empty down there it could get dangerous but never around ten, eleven, twelve, one o'clock, then there were still a lot of people out.

Veronika spoke of the street space as populated by a diverse population: curious people, people passing by, clients and women involved in prostitution. Rather than narrating the street space as a monolithic, dangerous place she narrated how the space was lived and experienced differently depending on the time of the day. With time, late at night, the street space altered from populated to empty, from 'safe' to 'dangerous'.

Massey argues that the social relations of space are experienced differently and variously interpreted by those holding different positions as part of it (Massey, 1994, p. 3). There is not one space/spatiality but many. While Veronika, in her narrative, addressed the street space as altering and shifting with the time of the day, Yulia told a story about how the street space shifted depending on one's position in it.

As stated before, recently after Yulia migrated to Sweden she met and married a Swedish man. The main reason for Yulia marrying was to get a Swedish passport. Soon after getting married, the husband introduced Yulia to street prostitution.

So I had a relationship with a fifty year old man again, this time in Sweden. I didn't know I could have relationships with people my own age, only with older guys with lots of money. So I met him and he didn't have any money but he did have a Swedish passport and that was another value. So I was like – Okay, you can do it! You've managed the other fifty year olds. And my mom approved – Marry him as long as you get a Swedish passport. This is when the real prostitution experience starts, the one I really loath. In Russia it was almost like a game to me, it was my choice too. But so I've met him and for some funny reason we go by Malmskillnadsgatan before the wedding, really weird I thought but he was like - Yes, girls work here, they stand here during the nights and then cars come and they open the doors, get into the cars and go and you know it's a really easy way to make money. Some make a lot of money doing it. – Really? Okay... and we kept going. But the day after or some days

after we go back there and I found it really weird that he was talking so much about this street, I was going to get married and live happily and, oh well, live with the fifty year old but at least have a family.

Yulia's plan to marry for papers did not turn out as she had hoped it would. The passport came with conditions Yulia had not agreed on.

I saw him as a potential passport, but when we first met we were friends... but maybe he could sense that I had plans, or maybe he just felt that he could get something in return, I don't know what he was thinking, but I did end up on the street. One day I come home, I had been out in the city looking to meet a normal guy, the fifty year old... I mean I realized that I would never be happy with him. So I was out in the city trying to find someone or at least meet friends, someone to hang out with. But when I come back my passport is gone and all the money I had were gone and the lock cabinet where I kept all my documents was locked and I couldn't get to them and he says – Well girl let's get serious, I have showed you where to go if you want your papers. If you want your passport you have to earn some money. I thought to myself – Well, well it's not new to me. So I ended up on the street and it was really not new to me, I had already sold sex but the difference was that now I didn't do it voluntarily.

Yulia put up with the situation for a while but then she decided to leave.

I won't pay this price to get my papers. I mean to make money for him in order to get my residence permit on my terms would have been one thing, but to be denied my freedom, that's where I had to draw the line. Maybe because of my childhood, I don't know, but that's where it ended. It had to end. So I ran away from him and lost my papers, since you had to be married for two years. But I took that risk because I felt that the price was too high to pay.

Even though Yulia had sold sex before she had done it 'on her own terms'. Being denied her freedom and the possibility to choose, Yulia decided that the price to pay was too high, she ran away. After Yulia ran away from her exploiter she continued her involvement in prostitution but now 'on her own terms'.

My best memory was when I managed to get away from him, the best memory I have from Sweden, or the first best memory was when I was living in this apartment and I used to ride my bike from there to the street. I had just rented

the apartment and I had decided to meet up with a client and I was riding my bike going to meet him and I felt so happy and free, even though I was going to meet with a client. It might sound strange that I could feel that way but it was so important to me to liberate myself from this person that I could even feel happy about selling sex. That's how oppressed I felt.

Yulia did not make sense of prostitution as inherently exploitative nor of the street space as a monolithic place. The same place was experienced diametrically different depending on Yulia's emplacement in it. It shifted from a space marked with exploitation and coercion to a space she returned to with a sense of freedom. It was her social location rather than the geographical place that shaped her experience of being exploited/empowered.

How the street is experienced depends both on one's social location and one's personal biography. Just as Maya, Maria and many of the other participants constructed online spaces of prostitution as safe in relation to the street as a dangerous place, Lydia constructed the street space as a safe place in relation to online spaces. This had an explanation in Lydia's personal biography.

Lydia is from a middle class background, she is in her mid-forties and had sold sex from the street for about ten years. She is originally from Brazil but has lived in Scandinavia for the last twenty years. She started selling sex when she was in her late twenties. She had just divorced her Norwegian husband and moved to Oslo. She was running out of money and did not know what to do when she was approached by a woman in a restaurant:

L – So I was sitting there in McDonalds with my burger and I was *so very sad*. I was sitting there thinking... I think I had been sitting there for two hours with that burger and some fries trying to fill up and then she came. She asked – Are you alone? Are you waiting for someone? I said – No, I'm not waiting for anyone I'm just sitting here eating. - Can I get you an ice cream or some coffee or something? And I said - Yes you can, I spent my last money on that burger I bought. So she bought me a cappuccino and I drank it and she was sitting there talking to me – Where do you live now? – I live in Bergen but I moved here because I divorced my husband. I don't know if I should stay or move back to Brazil. I don't know, I don't know anything, I said. – I'll help you to get some money, she said and she took me to the street. It's not far from the central station. (...) She drove after me when I got a client, she always wrote

down the licence plate number... for about a month she helped me and she was real nice. She never asked for any money but she said – When I go with a client it would be great if you write down the number because there are many assholes here. There are many assholes here so please write down the number if I don't come back. Do you understand? – Yes I understand, I'll write, I'll help you. And so we did for a month, and then she disappeared from the street. She lived somewhere else in the north or somewhere and she was going back and forth like drug addicts do... But then she disappeared from the street and at first I was a little scared.

A – Yes, you were on your own...

L – Yes, if she's not here to write, what do I do? I got real scared but I thought I have to get by anyway. I can't rely on her. Then it took quite long before she came back, it was about seven, eight months... and when she came back it was about a month or so before that thing happened to me...

About a year after Lydia had started to sell sex she was assaulted and abused by a client. Lydia met the man on the street. When they got to Lydia's apartment he tried to strangle her but she managed to escape and reported him to the police. He was arrested but not convicted. The traumatizing event led to Lydia not daring to go back to the street in five years. During those years she only met regular clients. She moved to Sweden a few years ago and had since then sold sex from the street. Quite contrarily to Maya, Maria and many of the other participants with indoor experience Lydia constructed the street as safe in relation to online spaces of prostitution:

L – Because of the competition from the Romanian women most of the Swedish women disappeared from the street, there are not so many Swedish women left on the street, they took over, the Romanians. Most of them [the Swedish women] have ads online. I don't have an ad online, because I'm still scared because of what happened to me.

A – I understand.

L – It's still there, it's still there...

A – I understand.

L – And clients from the internet, when they come to my place, then I don't have a chance to check how I feel... you know, is it okay or not... and that's why I don't dare to do it. I only take the ones that I know, and the ones that I meet that I get a chance to talk to a little before, to find out some more... But the internet, I'm scared to death by the internet...

A – Yes, I understand. When you meet someone on the street you get a chance to talk to the person a little before and...

L – Yes, then I have time to assess the situation, is he is okay or not. You can never know for certain if a person is okay or not but at least you have some time to try to find out...

A – Right.

L – But if somebody knocks on my door and immediately walks in how am I supposed to know... No, I couldn't... no, no, no... that's dangerous. I wouldn't dare to do that...

Lydia used the same argument as many of the indoor participants used in relation to the street when she spoke of why she avoided the online space of prostitution, that it was dangerous, that she would not be able to screen the client properly. While Maria perceived it as risky 'jumping into cars', Lydia perceived it as risky having clients 'walking through her door'. They both constructed their space as safe(r) in comparison to other spaces.

While the participants with indoor experience constructed the street space as a monolithic entity, as a dangerous place, the participants with street experience constructed the street as consisting of not just one but many spaces. Experiences of the street were described as shifting depending on time, social location and personal biography.

### Positioning the self against 'the (street) prostitute'

Most of the participants with indoor experience imagined the street as a dangerous place, many of them also imagined the women in the street as different, positioning themselves against 'the (street) prostitute'. As I stated in the beginning, 'the prostitute' has been constructed as a 'public woman' a 'woman of the street'. The othering of women involved in prostitution has entailed interconnected social and spatial processes of seclusion. The prostitution stigma has in that sense been tied to space.

When I asked Sonja what she thought were the common misperceptions or prejudices against people involved in prostitution she said:

S – ... when you talk about escorts you think about drug addicted women on the street and that's not right... there are girls that I know drink too much and so on. But then you have to remember that if you look at an ordinary

workplace in a regular size business... if you dig around a bit you'll find people with all kinds of problems, problems with alcohol, bad marriages, and I don't think that this group [women involved in prostitution] is any different, that's just what you look for when you do different studies and stuff like that. I don't believe those things are more prevalent in the group as such. But you have to distinguish between escorts that work in this way and people with drug addiction in the street. (...)

A – So do you believe that people that sell sex from the street mostly do it because of their drug addiction?

S – No, I don't know... I know that there are some that don't... but that's the stereotypical image so... and I mean that group exists as well... So, you can't compare apples to oranges...

A – Mm.

S – It doesn't work...

I understand the 'oranges' Sonja referred to as 'the (street) prostitutes' and the 'apples' individual women involved in indoor prostitution. Sonja appeared to be positioning herself against *the stereotypical image* of 'the (street) prostitute' rather than the flesh and blood women in the street. This type of positioning became even more obvious in Selma's narrative.

Selma and I got in touch through her escort ad, she is a humorous and witty woman in her early twenties. She comes from a middle class background and after dropping out from high school, she had worked a few jobs and had, when we met, recently completed a course to become a makeup artist. When we met for our first interview, she had sold sex for some months. She first got in touch with clients via social forums. Selma was still new to prostitution and struggled with how to make sense of her prostitution experience. When she positioned herself against what she perceived as society's ideas on selling sex, she positioned herself against the 'street prostitute'.

A – Mm... I thought about what you said before regarding society's view on selling sex and that you don't think of yourself as 'a whore'... What do you think 'a whore' is?

S – Well, I guess it's someone like me... But what you think of when you think of a whore I guess is a street walker... like someone without teeth... My teeth are attached by this [points at her braces]... no but someone who needs money for drugs and wears ragged clothes and is just overall an outsider in society.

A – Mm... and when you first did your research and looked around [online] what kind of image did you get then?

S – Well on... These worn down, I haven't seen a lot of them I guess that they don't hang out there. On SA [sex work web community] I think they seem... the girls there seem nice and really sharp and there you get a totally different image or how to put it... you're like anyone else. It's not like... (...) It's not all that you are...

Selma equated 'the whore' with 'the street prostitute' someone 'worn down', drug addicted, without teeth, an outsider, an Other, defined by prostitution, someone who was nothing like her. The online space of prostitution provides a means to avoid the othering that the whore stigma entails, a new space, for a new subject to emerge, a subject that is like 'anyone else'. As Selma equated 'the whore' with 'the street prostitute' Lisa positioned herself against 'the (street) prostitute'.

Lisa and I also got in touch through her escort ad. Lisa is in her early twenties and was working part time at a regular job. She comes from a working class background and at the time of our first interview she had just moved to live with her boyfriend in a small town in the north and had therefore exited prostitution. When she first received my email she did not respond since she was about to exit prostitution but after some weeks she contacted me anyway and we decided to meet up. Lisa did not refer to her experience of sex for money as prostitution:

L – I can't even to this day say that I have been a prostitute, it feels like a bad word you know, so it's more like I've gotten paid for sex, for sexual services you know...

A – Right, so you don't think about it as prostitution?

L – No...

A – What does that mean to you?

L – No but you've been raised to think that it's something bad so... no... I prefer to use the term escort, it feels better...

A – And what does it mean to you?

L – Well, it feels like it's a little bit more... I mean this feels really stupid to say, but it feels like prostitutes they walk the street, while escorts... it's more, it's a little better...

A – Yes, many talk about it in that way it's not only you... So what do you think about street prostitution, what's the difference?

L – I personally would never do it, it feels very risky... anything can happen. I

mean it could on the internet too but it feels... no...

A – It feels more dangerous?

L – Yes... (...) I personally would never do it...

Lisa both distanced herself from the stigma of prostitution, by placing the ‘real’ prostitution and the ‘real’ ‘prostitute’ in the street space, and constructed the street as a dangerous place. However the riskiness that Lisa imagined street prostitution entailed appeared not to be only, or maybe even primarily, physical danger but rather the stigma of the street space.

In exploring the participants’ stories about the meaning and significance of space to the prostitution experience and in the constitution of the self, it became clear that the spatiality of prostitution experience was much more central in the indoor participants’ narratives. ‘The danger of prostitution’ was, by many of these participants, imaginatively placed in ‘the dangerous landscape’ of dark and dirty city streets (Hubbard, 1999, p. 170). The participants with street experience, on the other hand, constructed the street not as a monolithic entity, but as consisting of, not just one, but many spaces. Experiences of the street space were described as shifting and dependent on time, social emplacement and personal biography.

Being involved in prostitution entails ever-present risks such as, violence, stigmatization and marginalization. While the indoor participants’ construction of the street space as a dangerous place may have conveyed a real concern for the perceived risk involved with street prostitution, it also conveyed a more general sensibility as it placed street prostitution socially beneath them. The social hierarchy was mapped onto the spatial. Being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed entering into new relations of power/resistance. Positioning themselves against the street space and ‘the (street) prostitute’ could be seen as a technology of resistance, as a way to resist the stigma of prostitution. While the street space is overloaded with meaning and closely tied to the othering of ‘the prostitute’ the internet offers a new space for a new subject to emerge.

The analysis has so far mostly engaged with how space was shaped in the narratives of the participants, how ideas about ‘the prostitute’ as ‘public woman’ and the street as a dangerous place was employed to ascribe meaning to the subjects in that space and to place the danger and stigma of prostitution elsewhere. The sex industry is changing and today most prostitution takes place indoor mediated by information and communication technology. Moving on to recent

changes in the sex industry, I will discuss how prostitution experience is shaped by reconfigurations of the public/private and how online spaces of prostitution both shape and are shaped by the dispositif of prostitution.

## **8.2 The public/private reconfigured – the privatization of ‘public women’**

The sex industry has undergone a lot of changes over recent years. As prostitution has been professionalized and normalized as sex work and new communication technologies have emerged, the meanings and practices of prostitution have been transformed. Prostitution has, at least in part, been deterritorialized from its former territorialization in the street. Bernstein argues that the receding street prostitution and the normalization and professionalization of prostitution as sex work are phenomena that must be understood in relation to interrelated features of postindustrial society: the emergence and impact of the service economy, new information technology and changing norms regarding gender and sexuality (Bernstein, 2007, p. 110). In post-industrial society the public/private has been reconfigured. Public-sphere market logics have become intertwined with private-sphere emotional needs (Bernstein, 2007, p. 5). As the binary constructions that characterized the dispositif of modern prostitution: public/private, work/home, commerce/intimacy, market/sexuality have been challenged, new meanings and practices within prostitution have emerged.

Neo-liberal policies aiming to stimulate business and deregulate markets have led to a surge of new opportunities for profits within the sex industry. Sexual commerce, formerly located in the margins of society, has been mainstreamed as the internet and the success of e-commerce have extended the reach and cultural visibility of the sex industry (Comella, 2010, p. 286). Barbara Brents and Teela Sanders argue that these mainstreaming processes have to be understood within the larger context of neoliberal policies in which “*to consume and commodify all aspects of social life*” serve as a powerful draw (Brents & Sanders, 2010, p 58). They discuss mainstreaming of sexual commerce, as both economic and social. Economic mainstreaming has to do with changes in business form, marketing and distribution, while social mainstreaming has to do with shifts in social attitudes towards the acceptability of sexuality as a legitimate form of commerce (Brents & Sanders, 2010, p. 43).

The internet has played an important role in both the economic mainstreaming of sexual commerce and the reframing of prostitution as legitimate business.

The upscaling, diversification and gentrification of the sex industry has been facilitated by the internet (Bretns & Sanders, 2010, p. 58). The mainstreaming of sexual commerce and the relocation of prostitution from the street space to the internet has not only entailed new opportunities to advertise and locate sexual services but has also entailed a new space for new meaning, new practices and as discussed previously, ultimately for new subjects to emerge.

Both the economic and social mainstreaming of sexual commerce has helped to construct “*clean and shiny urban spaces*” in which prostitution has been reterritorialized, far from ‘dark and dangerous’ city streets (Bernstein, 2001, p. 411). Bernstein speaks of the relocation of prostitution from the outdoor public space of the streets to indoor private spaces as a ‘privatization of public women’ (Bernstein, 2001, p. 70). Through the rest of the chapter I will employ Bernstein’s idea about the privatization of public women in exploring the spatiality of prostitution experience. Through the participants’ narratives I will explore not only how the space of prostitution has been transformed but also how the practices and meanings of prostitution have shifted in accordance with the new space in which it takes place.

### The relocation of prostitution from the streets to the web

‘The privatization of public women’ most obviously consists of the relocation of prostitution from the streets to private homes, hotels and rented apartments (Bernstein, 2007, p. 69). The shift from outdoor prostitution to indoor prostitution started to take place in Sweden in the 1990s. One of the arguments frequently used against the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services was that it was going to drive prostitution underground. When the law was enacted in January 1999 prostitution did initially disappear from the streets. It did however return after some time, even though it never reached its former scale. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the shift from outdoor to indoor prostitution had started to take place already before the law against the purchase of sexual services was enacted. This was not only the case in Sweden but rather an international trend conditioned by the development of new information and communication technology which had led to new practices of prostitution.

Veronika was one of the few participants who experienced the enactment of the law from the street space. When I asked Veronika how the street space changed when the sex purchase act was enacted in January 1999 she said:

V – I won 25 000 crowns playing lotto on New Year's Eve so because of that I didn't have to work as much. So, during that first month I honestly don't know what happened in the street, but I guess there was a lot less traffic. But I could stay away then... for a while... but then when I was back... in the beginning there wasn't that much surveillance, they [the police] were there every now and then and the relationship between us and the detectives was still very good... I didn't think much of it then but then when the Romanian girls started coming with pimps and everything, then the police presence increased and then they were there every night and it got very difficult, so it was in relation to that that I decided to go online...

A – Right and when was that? 2008, 2009?

V – Yes... no, I don't know. I might have been online before that too, there were these polish girls and they were really young and pretty and I wasn't exactly a youth anymore so I had a hard time getting clients compared to them, I guess you could say. So I decided to go online to get clients. So that [going online] coincided with the increase of foreign girls who were young and pretty, me getting older and that there were more detectives present [in the street], those three factors interacted in me feeling like there wasn't a market for me down there anymore. A lot of us Swedish girls disappeared around the same time from down there. For some time I was doing both and I guess it's only for the last couple of years that I haven't been there at all.

Veronika did not make sense of her relocation from the street to the internet as a result of the street space becoming more dangerous, but rather as a result of the changes on the street market. The changes that Veronika spoke of, particularly the increase of foreign women in street prostitution, reflect a larger trend, not only in Sweden but all the Nordic countries (Holmström & Skilbrei, 2013, p. 60). Holmström and Skilbrei argues that this trend may be understood as an effect of political and economic changes, increased migration and changes in border policies between Western Europe and Eastern and Southeastern Europe. In 2010 social workers reported that more than fifty per cent of the women in street prostitution were foreigners (Holmström & Skilbrei, 2013, p. 60). Veronika narrated the relocation from the street to the internet as something that took place over many years and could be related to a number of different factors such as increased migration in the form of transnational prostitution, competition from foreign women, and police presence. The increased policing of the space of street prostitution is related to the larger shift from a social policy framing of prostitution to a criminal justice framing. However, increased police

presence was in Veronika's narrative not primarily related to the enactment of the sex purchase act but rather described as a result of police investigative work regarding suspected human trafficking or procuring.

As mentioned before, the spatial privatization of prostitution has not only entailed the relocation of prostitution in space but has also resulted in new practices and produced new experiences for women involved in prostitution. Bernstein argues that the shift from the public space of the street to the private space of indoor prostitution also has entailed a social and emotional privatization of prostitution (Bernstein, 2007, p. 69). Veronika related how the relocation from the streets had impacted her:

V – I find it very negative that I can't solicit on the street because there are too many police officers there because I rather take clients that just shows up there, there could be much more risks when you get to know the men. There are other demands and they might start thinking of you as a girlfriend for example and start demanding more... In that sense it puts women at greater risk, the sex purchase act... and I often felt it was nice to go down to the street and to have your regular working hours. You weren't sure of who you would meet but at times that was just as well because then you didn't have to think before – Damn, I'm meeting that guy... and afterwards you could shake it off if it happened to be someone who wasn't as pleasant as everybody else... Then you could think that I'm not going with that person again you know, but now you really have to keep them in a good mood to make sure that they will come back...

A – Mm... was it easier for you to get in touch with clients in the street than via the internet?

V – Yes I felt like it became more part of my private life after the law was enacted and I don't like that change at all! But not having to be cold in the winter time I guess that's the good side to it, and then I'm willing to admit that there is more money on the internet... but the way I see it there are also greater risks.

(...)

A – It becoming part of your private life what do you mean by that Veronika?

V – I mean just that... that you have to be available more during the day, you can't... Well okay, I usually turn on my phone at three in the afternoon but before it was enough if I went out around six or seven in the evening... I never had to be available on the phone, I hardly *needed* a phone! I just had to go

down there and they would know which week days I was out. I didn't have to give out my number, they would drive around down there and look for me until they found me. It worked really well.

To Veronika the relocation of prostitution from the streets to the web did not merely entail that she moved from one 'stage' to another, the online space of prostitution entailed a shift in the practices and meanings of prostitution. O'Neill argues that one of the ways women 'make out' in prostitution is by performing 'the prostitute role/identity' within certain times and spaces (O'Neill, 2001, p. 84). Veronika narrated how the online spaces of prostitution did not allow the same demarcation of her public and private identity as the geographical space of the street prostitution did. While the street space allowed certain space-time tactics to demarcate the difference between her private and public self, the increased demand on her to be available to clients had made her feel like prostitution had invaded her private life. Veronika also spoke of it being more difficult to maintain the boundaries in relation to clients, that the demands had changed and that the boundaries between the contractual relationship of prostitution and private relationships were blurred.

In the rest of the chapter I will continue to explore how the practices and meanings of prostitution have changed in accordance with the new space in which it takes place. In the following subsection I explore the participants' narratives about the practices and meanings of online space(s) of prostitution. In the last subsection I explore how the reconfiguration of the public/private in prostitution has entailed a blurring of 'the public instrumental touch' and 'the private intimate touch'.

### Online space(s) of prostitution

The privatization of prostitution entailed a shift away from the street space to online spaces of prostitution and one-on-one technologically mediated encounters with clients. Women involved in prostitution increasingly advertise and communicate with prospective clients online. The deterritorialization of prostitution from the streets and the mainstreaming of the sex industry do, as stated before, not only entail that prostitution takes place in new spaces but also that new meanings are ascribed to prostitution and that new practices are developed. New technologies have had a great impact on the reconfiguration of space in the prostitution experience. Internet technology both mediate social forces and in itself have social effects, technologies can in that sense be seen as both 'cause and effect' of society (Davis, 2011). As Donna Haraway asserts "*it*

is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine” (Haraway, 1991, p. 177). The online space(s) of prostitution, such as escort sites, blogs and forums, are both shaped by and shape the dispositif of prostitution.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari posit two types of space – smooth and striated. Smooth and striated spaces are not constituted as strictly binary or dialectic, they “*exist only in mixture*” as each is continuously transformed into the other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 474). Smooth space is a space of multiplicities, of events and of movement, while striated space is stratified space, hierarchal and coded (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 478-79). Bonta and Protevi argue that “*striation result from stratification, the overcoding, centralization, hierarchization, binarization, and segmentation of the free movements of signs, particles, bodies, territories, spaces and so on*” (Bonta & Protevi, 2004, p. 151). In this section I will explore the participants’ narratives about what the reterritorialization of prostitution in online spaces entailed. I will discuss new entries and new communities in online space. I will also argue that the online space(s) of prostitution contain an interplay between smoothing and striating forces, as it is both a space in which prostitution escape the restrictions and boundaries of the largely striated space of street prostitution, and a space shaped by striating market forces and heteronormativity.

### New entries, new communities

One way that new technology has reconfigured prostitution experience is the easier access to the space of prostitution that the internet offers. Without venturing out of their private space people can explore online spaces of prostitution in the form of internet forums and websites. Some of the participants’ narratives addressed how the internet served as facilitator in the entry into prostitution.

Alicia and I got in touch through her escort ad. Alicia is an articulate and level headed woman in her mid-twenties. She was at the time of our interviews studying to achieve her high school diploma in order to then proceed with her university studies. She is a mother of two and comes from a working class background. Alicia started to sell sex about a year before we first met. When I asked Alicia where she would begin the story about her prostitution experience she said:

A – I’m not sure, it’s hard to say, but it started with me being a member on this community or it was a dating site and somebody came up with the idea...

because you know there are like a hundred guys to ten girls, so somebody came up with the idea that - If I offer some money then maybe I will get a date. In the beginning I was like, you know the way you've been raised - Do they think I'm a whore or what? But then I started to think about it and they were so nice and friendly and I thought to myself - I'll try it. I started to look around and I realized that it's like a little... it's something that actually happens, you know.

A - Yeah...

A - So I found this forum, sexwork.net, and there are a lot of girls (who sell) and guys who buy sex there who have a common forum where people talk to each other so I asked for help from both men and women with experience. It took some weeks from when I had the proposal to when I actually started to look, I looked for information. I felt safe in that sense (...) I asked a lot of questions about what kind of men they are, are they half-crazy lunatics who abuse and rape? But it didn't seem like it. When you talked to them it was clear that they were guys who were able to express themselves and they were socially competent. I talked a lot to guys over the phone as well and they said - Yes, we can meet before and you will get your money anyway if you don't want to see me, it's okay! So they were very open and friendly you know.

Even though first offended by the proposal to go on a 'paid date' Alicia started to 'look around' online and found a sex work forum on which she familiarized herself with escort prostitution. Through her online conversations with women involved in prostitution and prospective clients, prostitution and the subjects involved in prostitution were endowed with new meaning. As her perception of clients shifted from "*crazy, abusive and violent*" to "*socially competent, open and friendly*", prostitution started to appear as a viable option. Selma told a similar beginning story, after having been given proposals she started to explore online spaces of prostitution and eventually began to see clients. When we met she had sold sex for about four months. Before she started to advertise escort services, she had met a few men through other social forums.

S - I began in a few different ways... it sounded a little better then, somebody wanted to see me for dinner and then it wasn't that much money but it was... So that's how I got into it... I met men for dinners and I got shoes...

A - Mhm.

S - It was in April maybe and then I posted my own ad in May.

A - Right, so it's fairly recently...

S - Yes, it's fairly recently.

A – And the people you met in the beginning when there wasn't that much money involved how did you get in touch with them?

S – It was through common web communities like Quiser and DS, Dark side... those types of communities, that's where I got in touch with them.

A – Right, and then it was... Was that the purpose of you being there or were you given proposals that you accepted?

S – Yes, I was there as *me*, you know, with my real pictures and... yes as me for real, and then I had some proposals... and I thought well that might be interesting....

A – Right, do you think that's common?

S – Yes, I think it's real common, I would never date somebody thirty-five years older than me so there are probably many who do the same thing... Meet somebody for some form of... I guess it feels better than to give three thousand bucks to hang out with someone for an hour, I don't know... But I don't do it anymore, it's not worth it... I'm like – I can buy my own shoes now!

There is no clear demarcation of the online space of prostitution. Even though most contacts are made on escort forums, there is a grey zone constituted of sex chats, non-sex industry related social forums and dating sites in which proposals are made and services are advertised inconspicuously. Selma narrated how she, when she first started out, got in touch with clients through a non-sex industry related social forum. After some months she created an escort ad. When Selma and I met for our second interview we spoke about the role of the internet in her entry into prostitution:

A – If it wasn't for the internet, do you still think you would have tried it?

S – Absolutely not, absolutely not! Then I wouldn't have been able to... then I wouldn't be able to meet clients in the same way... I would never have gone out on the street, never!

A – I thought so.

S – No, but I would never have done it... Now I can lay around all bummy in my bed and – No, I don't want to see you... and yes...

A – It's simpler, or how do you put it... more accessible somehow?

S – *Much* more... for better or worse.

A – Right... I also thought about the fact that you were given proposals or more or less offers...

S – Yes...

A – Because when you were asked...

S – Yes, I mean on regular forums I was asked pretty often... I think it's quite disrespectful but it happened quite often and I know that my friends often get these kinds of questions...

A – Right... do you think it affected your process that you were given those proposals?

S – I mean I know in the beginning of the year I thought I could never sell sex but I was... I was still a little curious and that curiosity grew but I still thought – No, I could never do it... but then the more people... the more I read and talked to people... the more... and then I had the money issue...

Selma stated that she probably would not have entered into prostitution if it wasn't for her being able to familiarize herself with prostitution without venturing out of her private space. The online space(s) of prostitution enabled Alicia and Selma to explore prostitution without risking exposing themselves, without physically having to enter into the prostitution space. Both of them narrated how they initially could not imagine themselves entering into prostitution. However, in online spaces stigmatized notions of prostitution were challenged. Framed in sex work discourse the 'grittiness, dirt and danger' central to representations of prostitution and 'prostitutes' was replaced with glamorous images, professionalism and market terms. The economic and social mainstreaming of sexual commerce is both cause and effect of the 'clean and shiny' online spaces in which new meaning is attributed to prostitution. In order to mainstream prostitution, stigmatizing notions of prostitution had to be challenged by being relocated from the space in which it was constituted as deviant and dangerous.

One of the concerns that were raised regarding the privatization of prostitution and the relocation from the street to the web was that anonymous online spaces would have an isolating effect on people involved in prostitution. However, as illustrated by Alicia's and Selma's narratives, online spaces of prostitution contain bustling communities. In these spaces professional identities are developed and information is shared. On sex work forums there are web based 'how-to'-guides, with information on how to set up a web page, how to screen clients and other safety tips. Many of the participants mentioned these guides as important tools for them in exploring the risks and possibilities of prostitution. By first seeking information online and talking to others about the possibilities and risks involved in prostitution, the participants spoke of their entry into prostitution as an informed decision.

Many of the participants narrated being involved in prostitution as potentially very lonely as it often entailed a double life and few opportunities to talk to others. Lisa spoke of internet forums as serving both a practical and social purpose:

L – It's kind of a different life, you kind of live in a bubble, so I felt like it would be great to be able to talk to someone who does the same thing! You know just to vent. (...) It was great when Emma, the girl I used to stay with, started [to sell sex], then we could talk about it. Before that I mostly wrote and talked to people on the forum.

A – Right, so you used to be active there?

L – Yes, I wrote a lot privately and wrote a lot of messages to other girls, I wrote a few posts as well and read a lot...

A – Yes, so... What function did it serve for you, to be able to talk to others?

L – It was a lot about the venting, some people are good at keeping things inside but I really like to talk about things that happen and even if... I had a few bad experiences, not many at all, one or maybe two, but you want to be able to talk about it, you don't want to carry it around. And it's the same when you've had a good experience, not to talk about details, I wouldn't do that, but you know overall... everybody has a need to talk you know...

A – Yes, exactly... Are people there... do you think that people have been open and that it's been easy to have those kind of conversations there [on the forum]?

L – Yes, absolutely, I've been in touch with a few and all of them have been from the city and they've been absolutely lovely. There is a girl or a woman there who... if I had a bad experience from a date I could send the info to her so that she could warn the others, because information spreads...

Lisa addressed both the practical and social functions of the forum. Primarily the forums offer a space in which women involved in prostitution can exchange experiences and talk about things they might not be able to talk about with others, secondly the forum has practical functions allowing women to report clients who are disrespectful, violent or suspected of being dangerous. Sonja also emphasized the importance of the forums:

S – The site works like a connecting link, and if something has happened you can talk about it there. You can call some of the girls if you would like to. If you have a problem, you can discuss it. And then it's this common sense thing – if you're alone you're pretty vulnerable but if you're a group... that gives

strength. It's a totally different thing, because sometimes, for example if you're making a certain decision you may think to yourself – I wonder if that was right? And then you can talk about it and hear others experiences.

A – What are the advantages of being a group to you personally?

S – It's a lot about being able to discuss with others, especially if something has happened. I've only got into trouble once but then it was really nice to be able to go on the forum and write about it and really... There were a few people that immediately wrote and agreed that it was fucked up and asked me how I was doing and things like that and then there was a man that I have discussed with a lot, he doesn't live in the same city but he asked if he could call and he talked with me for hours...

Sonja spoke of the companionship with others on the forums as making her feel less vulnerable. She argued that considering the extent to which women involved in prostitution operate independently in Sweden, online communities are of great importance. This was clearly the case for many of the participants.

### Online space(s) – smoothing and striating forces

The online space of prostitution is far from a monolithic entity, it is a space in which community and commerce are combined, a space of companionship and a market place. I argue that online spaces of prostitution are constituted by a constant interchange of smoothing and striating forces. While the deterritorialization of prostitution from the striated street space released smoothing forces, allowing new meanings and practices of prostitution to be negotiated, online spaces of prostitution are simultaneously market places conditioned by striating market forces and heteronormativity.

Jessica Ringrose argues that while Deleuzian analytics have been employed in making utopian arguments about online space as 'panacea of flight', 'freedom from the corporeal body', and 'limitless space for constructing new identity' internet research reveal online space to be "*highly stratified (hierarchized) through commodified, corporate packaging and advertising that marketizes online spaces*" (Ringrose, 2011, p. 601). The online space of prostitution is undeniably a marketized space as it constitutes part of the sex industry. While there is mainly one sex work forum used by women involved in prostitution in Sweden, there are forums dedicated to discussions on commercial sex on a number of websites. On the main sex work forum there are both escort ads and a forum with sub-forums regarding different topics. In the forums, clients and escorts participate in

discussion threads ranging from advice on client and escort etiquette, reviews of individual escorts and experiences of prostitution, to prostitution policy. While the participants constructed the online space of prostitution as an entry point into prostitution and a space of companionship between women, it was also constructed as a space to perform ‘the escort’ under the client’s gaze.

Gender performances are both spatially constituted and constitute spatial subjects. While ‘the prostitute’ has been constituted as a ‘public woman’, a woman of the street the smoothing forces of the online space has allowed for new subjects to emerge. Most of the indoor participants refer to themselves as ‘escorts’. In the forum, gender performances, ways of being ‘male’ or ‘female’, ‘client’ or ‘escort’ are negotiated. As will be further explored in the subsequent section, the privatization of prostitution has entailed not only the contestation of the idea of prostitution as ‘gritty, dirty, and dangerous’ but also the contestation of prostitution as contractual, instrumental and devoid of emotion. Escorts have been constructed as agentic subjects, as sex professionals with preferences and choice, countering ideas of ‘the prostitute’ as a sexually indiscriminatory sex object. However, there is a continuous negotiation of norms regarding language, behavior and practices in online spaces of prostitution. Rebecca spoke of how stigmatizing notions of ‘the prostitute’ as sexually indiscriminatory and lacking choice still were expressed on the forum:

When you read how men... or guys, I don’t know their age, talk about prostitution or buying sex it’s like – I ‘ve noticed that there are many whores who write... Whores! They use the term whore! – I’ve noticed that there are many whores who don’t want to see immigrants, what kind of bullshit is that!? A whore, is a whore, I mean what’s the difference between a black and a white dick? Oops, and there’s an awkward silence. You know that someone in the thread will flip out soon, and then there’s a huge argument: – Of course she can choose who to see and who not to see, you moron! Just because you sell sex it doesn’t mean you see just anyone!

Even though online spaces of prostitution are far from exempt from stigmatizing ideas of women involved in prostitution, the boundaries of ‘the escort’ and ‘the client’ are under negotiation. There is a regulation of discourse in which some ideas are accepted while others are contested. Sonja also spoke on how this negotiation was carried out.

The forum was started for the escorts and there are quite a few of us who protest ideas like ‘test driving an escort’ for example, then we usually refer them to Ford Escort (laughs). And there are men who protest as well, men who want a decent level of conversation. An escort has the right to get a post, or at times a whole thread, removed if it is offensive to her. (...) There was a period right after I had started when there was a really bad vibe on the forum and when I say bad vibe I mean that there were a lot of insults/attacks and stuff like that so we went on strike we refused to write a single word on the forum I think for about two weeks and after that it actually got a lot better.

Sonja narrated how clients’ offensive behavior and objectifying commentaries on ‘escorts’ led to a strike on the forum where the women refused to write any posts unless the clients’ behavior changed. Sonja’s story is an example of how new meanings and practices are negotiated and discourse is regulated in the online space.

Despite the smoothing forces that allow women to counter and talk back to stigmatizing discourses, the online spaces of prostitution are also constituted of the capitalist and heteronormative striating forces of the sex industry. As stated before, online space(s) of prostitution, such as escort sites and forums, are both shaped by and shape the dispositif of prostitution. The sexualization and commodification of bodies is inherent to the sex industry. Commodified gendered and sexualized norms act as a striating force in the online space. Even though most of the participants resisted ideas of them as body objects in the discussion threads on the forum, ultimately many of them made sense of the interactions that takes place in the online space as a part of ‘the business’, and were careful to perform idealized forms of commodified feminine sexuality in order to attract clients. Selma spoke of the ambiguity she felt towards aspects of the online space, particularly towards the review function of the forum:

A - How do you feel about that world... It’s more or less like a little world on the internet with the forums and everything, do you feel at home there?

S – No, I don’t really I guess. I don’t know, it’s nice with a space in which whores are celebrated... naw but... You’re like a product. I mean when you’re there you have to consider how you represent yourself, to look good, not to get a bad reputation... and it’s really disgusting because there are reviews and... then you think to yourself - Oh, okay, I’m something that can be reviewed now...

A – What was that like, to read a review about yourself?

S – It was weird... but it was nicely written and everything but it was still weird. I don't think that you should write about people in that way... Like – Today I met a john, he had a small dick, don't meet with him! I could never write anything like that!

At the same time as the online space of prostitution constituted a space in which new meanings and practices of prostitution could be negotiated, the striating, capitalist and patriarchal forces of the sex industry territorialized Selma as a body object, as “*something that can be reviewed*”. Even though most of the participants did not make sense of their involvement in prostitution as ‘selling their body’, but as ‘selling sexual services’, their narratives spoke of how it was hard to draw a clear line between the two, since the body and the perceived attractiveness and the functions of the body were integral to the services that were purchased and were part of what was reviewed. Many of the participants spoke of conforming to culturally prescribed norms of commodified feminine sexuality as a tactic to attract and maintain a regular client base.

In research on client behaviour, client interaction and particularly the review function of the forums has been described as complementing client's paid sexual encounters offline (Katsulis, 2012, p. 212). The interaction between clients on the forums both enhance individual men's offline encounters, through insights and advice shared by more experienced clients, but also serve a fundamental social purpose. The forums offer a space for heteronormative virtual male bonding (Sanders, 2008, p. 74). Rebecca had her own theories about why clients wrote reviews of their encounters.

They want to show that they have been there, that they can afford it, that they dare to do it... On Flashback for example, each section of the forum, they could be about anything from drugs to interior design, have their shining stars. You get a certain status based on what you tell and if you don't have anything to tell you will of course have a low status. The more you can say that you've done the higher up you'll get in the hierarchy. And for men it's important to have high status so I guess it's about showing – I can afford it, I can and I dare to do it, and then there are some that just hate women. It's easy to take that out on us, even if you haven't even been with that person you still want to be part of the game and throw in a punch.

At the same time as new technologies have created a new space that is not literally ‘in the street’, prostitution and women involved in prostitution are today much more available and ‘public’ than in the past. The online space of prostitution is far from a monolithic entity, it is both a public and a private space, a space in which community and commerce is combined, it is a space in which a professional identity can be developed and a space in which new meaning and practices of prostitution are negotiated. Moreover it is a space constituted by a constant interchange of smoothing and striating forces, a space of movement as well as a space of boundaries and restrictions. In the following subsection I will explore how the reconfiguration of the public/private within the dispositif of prostitution has led to new meanings and new practices of prostitution reaching far outside the online space.

### The blurring of ‘the public instrumental touch’ and ‘the private intimate touch’

In the last section of the chapter I will continue to discuss how the public/private has been reconfigured within the dispositif of prostitution by engaging with the participants’ narratives about recent changes in prostitution practice, and what Oerton and Phoenix (2001) describe as a blurring of ‘the public instrumental touch’ and ‘the private intimate touch’.

As stated initially, ‘the prostitute’ was symbolically important in defining the nature of public and private space and the appropriateness and inappropriateness of certain sexual behaviours in certain spaces. While ‘respectable feminine sexuality’ was constructed as something private and intimate that takes place in the private sphere, prostitution was constructed as contractual, instrumental and devoid of emotion. Women who engaged in the ‘public sex’ of prostitution were thus constructed as immoral and disreputable subjects.

Empirical studies on prostitution experience frequently mention how women involved in prostitution desexualize encounters with clients, constructing prostitution as money, business and work rather than as sex. The maintenance of boundaries between the private and public self has been described as particularly important in the lives of women involved in prostitution (Hubbard, 1999, p. 191). Women involved in prostitution employ a multiplicity of distancing tactics, symbolical, physical and psychological in order to separate their professional selves from their private selves (Høigard & Finstad, 1986; O’Neill, 2001; Phoenix, 1999). That women desexualize encounters with clients could be understood

both as a technology of resistance, an attempt to resist being constituted as disreputable and immoral, and as a distancing tactic, an attempt to separate between the private and public self.

Sara's narrative was illustrative of how many of the participants desexualized encounters with clients. Throughout her narrative, Sara emphasized the importance of being professional and having a clear demarcation between her professional and private self. When she first started to sell sex, she met clients through an ordinary sex contact site, but shortly thereafter she created an escort site in which she could professionalize her business. As Sara spoke of the division between her private and professional self, she stressed the importance of creating and maintaining boundaries in encounters with clients:

S – They are never to bargain, not on the date and not over the phone, then it's no immediately. I have gone for that before, then they come here and don't have enough money and so on... (...) Overall they just have to be respectful and respect my conditions and not question anything... and... ehm I only see men over twenty five because I have met younger guys who haven't respected the conditions, and most of all many who never showed up... Apart from that I don't know... yes well I don't kiss on the mouth, absolutely not. I never did, I've never kissed a client and I don't feel like I want to either. I wouldn't feel comfortable doing that... that's what separates... not only that of course, but that's one of the things that separates sex with a client from private sex... the kissing, that's holy to me...

A – I understand... What are your thoughts on that otherwise... private sex and sex with a client, what's the difference?

S – It's really difficult to explain but there is a difference... I don't feel like the way I see sex or my sex life has been affected in any way because of this... which is strange because maybe it should have...

A – How come you think it should have?

S – No but you know it's easy to... sex is sex, but then it isn't somehow... (laughs)

A – Right... and how is it not?

S – I rarely meet a client that I would consider going home with... if I was out for example... it has happened, but normally I'm not attracted to them. When I have sex privately then it's only with guys that I'm attracted to, so that's the difference and it's a huge difference but it's hard to explain... ehm... Sex with clients can be good, absolutely but it's just that. It's just sex, no feelings are involved...

A – Right... How... If you meet a person that you're not attracted to at all, how does that work for you?

S – A client...

A – Yes, exactly...

S – It... I... ehm... like I said most of the clients that I meet I'm not attracted to so it's very straight forward... we meet, we talk for five minutes and then we get undressed but I guess it's a role that I play kind of... I pretend to a certain degree...

(...)

A – This role, what does it entail or what does it mean to you?

S – ... Ehm... I mean... I'm myself with the clients... my professional self... it's not like I'm playing a role really, it's not like I'm playing anybody else, I'm playing myself in a professional role... it's hard to explain... There is a clear demarcation between the professional role and the personal role and the personal role and me... I don't know how to explain it really...

Sara spoke of maintaining the boundaries between her professional and private self by creating and enforcing a particular set of rules, she also employed physical distancing tactics, avoiding kissing clients on the mouth. Sex with clients was sex 'but then not somehow'. When I asked her what the kisses represented to her, she said:

Kisses represents a deeper type of intimacy to me... it's not like I only kiss people I'm in love with but I can't kiss someone I'm not attracted to... I can sleep with them but I can't kiss them... I just can't, it makes me feel disgusted. And like I said it's the kisses that separate professional sex from private sex... the kisses represent true intimacy...

Sara's narrative raises many important issues. Sara spoke of the physical encounters she had with clients as "*sex but then somehow not sex*", sex only becomes sex when it is private and intimate. She also spoke of her encounters with clients as devoid of emotion, "*there are no feelings involved*". Bernstein (2007) argues that while what was typically sold and bought in modern prostitution, was an expedient exchange of money for sexual release devoid of any emotion, in post-industrial prostitution what is bought and sold frequently entails eroticism and emotions that formerly have been confined to the private sphere. The reconfiguration of the public/private, the increasing commodification of social life, the growth of the service economy and changing norms around gender and sexuality has led to

a blurring of the commerce/intimacy, market/sexuality divides. Bernstein argues that the mainstreaming of prostitution and the privatization of public women are driving women involved in prostitution to provide their clients with ever more profound and more intimate forms of erotic encounters (Bernstein, 2007, p. 69). While Sara and many of the other participants desexualized encounters with clients and developed an instrumental relationship to their bodies dividing them into public and private regions Maria, Alicia, Eva, Maya, Selma, Sonja and Rebecca all, to different degrees, attempted to integrate what Bernstein refers to as “*an ethos of bodily pleasure, intimacy and authenticity*” in their prostitution practice, blurring the line between ‘the public instrumental touch’ and ‘private intimate touch’ (Bernstein, 2007, p. 101). I will now turn to their narratives in further exploring the different dimensions of ‘the privatization of public women’.

### The Girlfriend Experience and the emulation of the ‘private relationship’

The mainstreaming and normalization of sexual commerce has entailed a rising demand for more intimate forms of erotic encounters. This has led to the development of new prostitution practices. Girlfriend Experience, GFE, is a term mostly used in escort prostitution. The GFE emulates a ‘private relationship’ and is aimed at giving the impression of a mutual exchange of sexual intimacy (Milrod & Weitzer, 2012). What GFE entails varies from person to person but typically includes more time with each client, emotionally engaged conversation, a wider range of sexual activities such as foreplay, cuddling and kissing, (feigned or authentic) expressions of affection and intimacy and non-sexual activities. Even though there are precursors to this type of exchange of emotional intimacy, there are examples that demonstrate that women involved in prostitution have traded in capacities other than sex throughout much of history, Bernstein, among others, argues that the exchange of both sex and intimacy has expanded within the sex industry (Bernstein, 2007; Lever & Dolnick, 2010; Sanders, 2008a).

Alicia was one of the participants who marketed her services as Girlfriend Experience. Shortly after Alicia started to sell sex she decided to only see a few clients in order to enable closer contact and more comprehensive relationships:

I have this ability to get really close to my clients, it’s more than just this moment we meet. We email a lot in between and stay in touch... so you become a bit of a therapist, a listening ear. It takes quite a lot of energy so I rather just see a few. At the same time I like this up close and personal thing. I think the sex gets better and the encounters get better. I like the social part a lot too. I think there

are a lot of men out there who are looking for that as well, so it's my niche to be this little social girlfriend, more than the person you just see every now and then and don't hear anything from in between...

Alicia's approach to prostitution was neither instrumental nor devoid of displays of emotion. With new practices of prostitution, such as GFE, the binary construction of public/private, commerce/intimacy and market/sexuality are challenged. Commercial sexual relationships, like the ones Alicia was engaged in, mirror rather than counter the traditional romance, courtship, sexual acts and emotional intimacy of normative heterosexual relationships (Milrod & Weitzer, 2012, p. 4). I asked Alicia if she found any difficulties engaging in a prostitution practice in which the boundary between private and professional relationships is blurred.

Yes, that's when they fall in love with you, because that happens quite easily when you're showing a little love they might not get otherwise. So that's what's difficult. To both have this loving relationship and yet not... like where do I draw the line? How many text messages per day are okay? How many phone calls? How many emails? How long emails? Because I don't have the time, I have other things to do as well. I think that it's really nice but at times I think it's difficult for them to understand and they don't want it in their face you know like – I'm seeing other people too.

Since the form of prostitution Alicia was involved in entailed the emulation of a private relationship and an illusion of mutuality, the boundaries between professional and private relationships were somewhat blurred. The usual constraints that a more delimited sex-for-pay transaction placed on the relationship were not there. While Sara spoke of having to manage prostitution as sex but 'not sex', Alicia had to manage the relationships to clients as 'a loving relationship' yet not.

In order to maintain the illusion of mutuality, the commodified character of the relationship is downplayed. The commodification and the accompanying notion of impersonal market relations are often mystified, transformed or disguised. One manner in which women involved in escort prostitution have transformed the prostitution transaction is to charge for time rather than for specified acts. Maria narrated how some clients further tried to transform the economical transaction by disguising it, or reframing it as a gift.

M – I think some of them just feel lonely really. You buy a little company, intimacy. Sometimes I can tell that just as I feel that it's shameful having to take the money I can see that some men feel ashamed of having to pay. It can be manifested in that they put the money in the bag like this (shows how something is put discretely into her bag). That has happened. Or that they leave an envelope partly hidden under a flower. Or that they say that - This is not for the sex, it's a gift to you. I usually phrase it like that as well - It is a gift to me and you pay for my company. It sounds better than to fuck, you know. I think it makes them feel better as well – I pay for the company. Then it can also be manifested in a man calling and saying that – I just want a massage. But I mean if he *just* wants a massage... I mean it could be that he feels an urgent need to... – Oh, it's half past eleven at night and I want a massage! But probably it's... Because he says, - I just want a massage but then he says – You were so good looking, I couldn't help myself.

A – Right.

M – But you know he had probably planned it from the start...

The desire for mutuality shaped the encounters in different ways, Rebecca narrated how many of the men who contacted her described their physical features and at times sent photographs of themselves. The emails she received resembled contact ads rather than solicitations for sexual services.

75 to 80 percent of the emails are like – I'm this tall, this is how I look, here's a picture of me, am I good enough? It's like a contact ad... and even if I don't just see anyone, it matters what they are like, I don't care about the way they look.

By disguising the commodified character of the encounter, the illusion of mutuality is upheld. Sonja spoke of maintaining the illusion by not referring to the clients as clients but rather as dates.

There was a man who reacted to what we call the men recently and I totally understand him. Me personally I never use the word john, just as I don't use the word whore, it's just not, it's not my style. When talking to other girls I probably use the word client but some men have a problem with that, I could understand that. Even if it's pay-sex, sex is still something special, and even if there is no deeper relationship behind it they still want to feel a little bit like – She does it because she likes me too. They don't want to be called client or anything like that. I've had a problem with it for a while but then I tried to pull

myself together and say that I'm having a date instead, because I understand that people feel like it's a little offensive, it's so personal, sex. What we offer is a bit of escapism.

GFE is not simply about sexual encounters and sexual fantasies but about the emotional needs of male clients as a commodity market (Sanders, 2008b, p. 413). As Sonja stated most of the men are looking for something more than just sex.

Many of the men you meet are in a relationship in which the sex isn't working and they are starved for touch and comments and praise for their bodies and all these things. I mean if I tell a man that he has a very good dick he probably lives on that for a long time. But you have to believe in what you say, you can't say stuff that isn't true, you have to say... Some are just into the sex and it's very straight forward but my experience tells me that there are many who are looking for something. They want what they don't have otherwise, and sometimes it's some special kind of sex but sometimes it's just to be seen and held and that whole thing. (...)I think that a man's experience of this moment will be based on different things and it's not only about whether the sex was one hundred percent, it's mostly about whether he feels like he got what he was missing. Is it touch and to be seen that he is missing, he won't be satisfied by getting, to be crass about it, to fuck. That's not what he wanted.

GFE entails the display of certain emotions, it is not only about providing certain sexual services but also about giving the impression of a mutual exchange of sexual and emotional intimacy. Offering the escapism that Sonja spoke of entailed enabling and ensuring that the client felt certain emotions during and after the encounter.

The new meaning and practices that 'the privatization of public women' entail has clearly challenged the binary construction of 'the public instrumental touch' and the private intimate touch', and the perceived appropriateness and inappropriateness of certain sexual behavior and emotional expressions in certain spaces. Maria spoke of how even the concept of love at times surfaced in encounters with clients:

...some even fall in love with you, some say that they love you. I can't say I love somebody back. I don't. If somebody would ask me can't you just say it even if you don't mean it, then maybe I could say it. Just like someone asked me – Is it okay if I say I love you? It would just feel right in a situation like this. – Alright,

it's okay. But then maybe I would reply – You're nice. I try to say something that I honestly think.

The extract from Maria's narrative illustrates how radically the social meaning of prostitution has been transformed. While the sex of prostitution initially was constructed as contractual and instrumental, juxtaposed to the relational, intimate sexuality of the private sphere, new prostitution practices deconstruct this juxtaposition. By stating that – 'To say I love you just feels right in a situation like this', the client in the above extract unmistakably inscribed the prostitution transaction within the norms and expectations of a heterosexual romance relationship. That some women involved in prostitution provide clients with more intimate forms of erotic encounters does however not necessarily mean that boundaries between private and commercial sex are dissolved as will be discussed in what follows.

**'Bounded authenticity' and different ways of making sense of the desire for the clear and bounded character of commodified relationships**

Bernstein describes the new practices of prostitution in which women provide their clients with more profound and intimate forms or erotic encounters as a form of 'bounded authenticity', an 'authentic emotional and physical connection' that is genuine but limited by both time constraints and the economic transaction (Bernstein, 2007, p. 103). Bernstein argues that research on men who buy sexual services indicate that, even though some clients desire to experience an emotional connection reminiscent of the intimacy and emotions that previously have been confined to the private sphere, they still have a preference for the bounded authenticity of commodified intimacy over the "*messy infuseness of non-market exchange*" (Bernstein, 2001, p. 409). The commodified intimacy of prostitution is then not a substitute for the unbounded intimacy of a private relationship, but something different. The clear and bounded character of commodified intimacy offer boundaries that these clients described as desirable. This was equally true for some of the participants.

The desire for the clear and bounded character of commodified relationships was given different meaning in the participants' narratives.

Alicia, who spoke of the boundaries between private and professional relationships as blurry, also mentioned the bounded authenticity of prostitution as making her feel safe, knowing what to expect from the relationship.

A – So what's the difference between the relationships that you've had with clients and other relationships that you've had?

A – Yes, I think for example about if I would compare my boyfriend to the client who I'm still seeing, then the line isn't crystal clear. Apart from that the client is married and for given reasons he initiates our contact... But I wouldn't demand attention from him... but he's really... he gives me a lot of attention. The line isn't crystal clear, it's not. I guess it's that I have the right to break it off any time I like, we don't have any obligations to each other.

A – And that's something that feels positive?

A – Yes, it's pretty nice to know that... Then it's harder when it comes to my private relationship with my boyfriend, where are we... Where are we going? Is it going to lead something more? I mean if you have the pay, then you know that it won't lead to something more, it's not a relationship, it's not love, not *love* love you know...

Alicia spoke of the boundaries of the commodified intimacy of the prostitution practice as a preference. The economic transaction delimited the emotional exchange, it was not about love, 'not *love* love', rendering Alicia less vulnerable than in the private relationship with her boyfriend.

Eva also spoke of commodified intimacy as a preference. Eva and I got in touch through her escort ad. She is in her mid-fifties and a mother of three. She was divorced since some years back and had lived on her own since her children moved out. She entered into prostitution after a period of online sex dating. After getting divorced she was not interested in having a new relationship but wanted sex without further commitment. She was sex dating a few different men but after a while the men were interested in taking the relationship further. Jealousy and hurt emotions entered the picture and Eva decided to end her involvement with the men she was seeing at the time. This is when prostitution started to make sense to her.

E – ...jealousy entered the picture and two of them were feeling really bad. I had just recently had a conversation with one of the guys and one night I was sitting thinking about what I could do... I didn't want to hurt anybody, everyone had been okay with it from the start. Then I had the thought, why not... end it with these two guys and continue, but charge for it. It was just a thought I had, you know. But then I kept having that thought and I tried to get it out of my head because it wasn't really... I had never sold sex and never thought of anything like that before... But the more I had that thought

the more it made me think that, a thought that pops up all the time I have to explore. So I started thinking about how I could go about doing it and stuff like that. Then I talked to a friend and I talked to the children's father because I wanted them to know and I decided to create an ad to see what would happen. So I did and in the morning I had a bunch of answers, and that's how it started.

A – When you talk about it almost sounds like a strategy to be able to have...

E – Sex without demands, relationships without demands and sex without demands, yes!

A – To avoid emotions getting in the way?

E – Yes, exactly... And then I didn't know for how long I would do it. I might meet somebody I would fall in love with and then... but that wasn't my plan and it still isn't. Not that I'm trying to avoid falling in love, but I wouldn't like to live together with someone and have a steady relationship you know. If it happens I'm open for it, but it's not something that I'm looking for.

Eva made sense of her involvement in prostitution as a tactic for her to have casual sex without risking any further involvement. The transaction, sex for money, was spoken of as framing the sexual acts in a way that minimizes the risk of feelings to develop. Eva argued that an authentic connection was still possible within the boundaries of commodified intimacy.

Rebecca also spoke of the boundaries of the prostitution transaction as creating a relationship without demands. She claimed that the lack of demands enabled her to enjoy sex in a way she had not been able to in her private relationships.

A – The sex you have with clients does it differ from the sex you have privately or how do you see it?

R – No. Maybe I haven't had that many great sexual experiences. I'm not really... I mean they haven't been negative but... I don't know how to explain it but some have this mind blowing sex when they feel like their souls unite and no (laughs). No I haven't experienced that. It's more like a quite okay pass time and it can be... there have been good and not as good moments. You know, you can be in a relationship but it doesn't feel like... well when you're like - Oh, I'll do it for him and then other times I've done it because I want to. (...) I don't think there's a big difference strangely enough maybe... What's been negative in relationships you know, all of this – Oh, how will he deal with this? You know he takes things personal, if his dick doesn't get hard then you have to spend the rest of the night consoling him. If the dick doesn't get hard now then at least he's leaving in an hour, the client... There's not a big difference. I

thought there would be, but it's just ordinary men, and ordinary men I've had sex with before...

(...)

R – I never fake an orgasm, I do that sometimes privately (laughs). You know, at times when they want it so much and you don't feel like it... I never had an orgasm before when somebody has touched me, I've done it myself, but I had my first recently with a client...

A – Mm, how come you think?

R – What made it possible was that there were no demands... it wasn't important for our relationship or for him feeling good about himself, it didn't matter, but he said – You didn't have one? I will take care of that, and I said – I don't think so, and he said – Yes, I will take care of it I know how to listen to a woman and then after he came there was about five minutes and then I was like –What the fuck (laughs) and I had like multiple... and after that I had several multiple orgasms, and it's not like I get turned on by this thing [selling sex], I'm turned on by men (...) but these situations can be so relaxed just because there are no demands, they want me to do this and that and I do this and that and then you go your separate ways and you don't have to think okay no we are going to spend eight more hours together watching TV or something...

A – So less demands...

R – Yes, less demands.

While Alicia, Eva and Rebecca made sense of the boundaries that commodified relationships entailed as rendering them less vulnerable, minimizing the risk for feelings to develop and/or eliminating the demands of private relationships, other participants' more explicitly spoke of their involvement in commodified relationships as an attempt to avoid emotional harm. Maria spoke of sex in prostitution as less 'costly' than private sex, the economic transaction generated an important emotional boundary for her.

A – The sex you have for pay and the sex you have privately, how does it differ?

M – Ehm... I mean you could say... often the private sex is better, and when you do have sex privately then you have sex with Maria.

A – Yes.

M – You don't have sex with any of my alter egos or any of my characters, then

it's more personal to me. It's never... It's hard for me with separations, I have a borderline diagnosis so if I have sex with someone privately I sometimes find it hard to part or when he's leaving. I never feel like that when I have sex for money... Somebody said that the big difference between sex for money and sex for free is that sex for free costs a lot more.

A – Mm

M – Yes, it costs more for the heart.

A – I see what you mean.

M – Even if you've had a one night stand you could still get a little... Even if I haven't had a lot of one night stands...

A – Right so the money creates a certain distance then?

M – Yes, that's it. It creates a distance, and you want that distance.

Maria did not state that she preferred sex with clients over sex in private relationships, however she stated that the economic transaction of prostitution created a distance, a distance that she desired. Private sex costed more 'for her heart'.

While Maria made sense of her preference for the clear and bounded character of commodified relationships, as generating an important emotional barrier, Maya made sense of it as allowing her to take control. Maya spoke of how she before entering into prostitution often experienced a sense of loss of control in sexual situations.

M – I really misused sex to the fullest... I don't really want to think about it, but I really... I think it's quite common because my dad... My childhood was so-so, so I used to think that it was about me needing attention or something like that, but then I realized, after talking to people that – God, I'm really a sex addict! I've been with people that I would never have sex with now if I would get to choose. But I don't regret anything because that doesn't get you anywhere. I don't regret anything, but I wouldn't do it again.

[...]

A – And now... the sex that you have now, do you feel that it's more constructive than the sex you had then?

M – Yes I would say so... Like I said before, I really wouldn't have sex with somebody privately that I don't like because I get so much sex anyway if I want to, for money...

A – What does the money mean in that context?

M – Well, I guess it is more of a symbol for... how can I put it... an exchange.

It's like a deal you make or something... I don't know, it feels like it's more on my terms somehow...

A – Right.

M – And I really feel like many of the men who I've met while working treat me better than guys I've met in my private life... And that's also nice...

A – Mm, how does it get to be more on your terms? What do you think that's about?

M – Partly because I have the law [the sex purchase act] on my side, that's nice, and then it's on my terms, the way I choose my rules. I don't want to do this... I don't like that and if they say – I want you to do this, and I say no, a no is a no! If they don't respect that the deal is off and I can walk away or report them to the police...

A – And then before when you had sex that you perceived as destructive were there situations then that you felt weren't on your terms?

M – Yes, it's a little hard to explain but some of the guys I met maybe didn't... It wasn't really about me wanting to see *them*, I just wanted to have sex. And then it's the wrong person and we like different things. Then they try to boss me around because... I don't know why, maybe because they're idiots and... I guess I just met the wrong guys... It doesn't feel like you can decide as much then, you have to compromise...

Maya spoke of the commodified character of relationships within prostitution as allowing her to take control in sexual situations. While she experienced a lack of control in private relationships, the social contract that prostitution involves provided Maya with a framework that enabled her to exercise more control.

The blurred boundaries between private and professional relationships of the GFE entailed not only managing sex, but also managing relationships with clients as 'both loving relationship and not', to create an illusion of mutual sexual intimacy and even expressions of love but not '*love love*'. That prostitution involves more intimate forms of erotic encounters does however not necessarily mean that boundaries between private and commercial sex are dissolved. 'Commodified intimacy' is limited by both time constraints and the economic transaction.

Some participants described the clear and bounded character of commodified relationships as a preference. How they made sense of this preference differed widely. Some of them spoke of the boundaries that commodified relationships offered as rendering them less vulnerable, minimizing the risk for feelings to develop and/or eliminating the demands of private relationships. In these participants' narratives, the preference for commodified relationships may

appear as an extension of the increased commodification of social relations. Neo-liberalism puts extreme emphasis on the 'free and independent individual'. Neoliberal subjectivity is built on a renunciation of and dis-identification with vulnerability, dependence and need. Layton argues that this creates a context in which dependency on others, lack of autonomy, indeed relationality and connection must be renounced (Layton, 2008, p. 69). The bounded, transactional and consumptional character of encounters with clients allowed the participants (and their clients) to avoid the emotional entanglements of private relationships, rendering them less vulnerable. However, deeming the preference for commodified relationships simply an effect of neoliberal subjectivity and increased commodification of social relations disregards the individual's reasons to renounce vulnerability or dependency. Some of the participants explicitly spoke of their preference for commodified relationships as an attempt to avoid emotional harm or gain control in sexual situations. In their narratives connections were made between their preference for the bounded character of commodified relationships and past experiences of loss of control or emotional distress.

### **8.3 Concluding remarks**

In this chapter I have explored the participants' stories about the meaning and significance of space to the prostitution experience and in the constitution of the self. With an understanding of space as ever shifting and constructed out of social relations I have discussed both how space shapes and is shaped in the prostitution experience. In the first section of the chapter I explored the construction of 'the prostitute' as a public woman. I focused on how the indoor participants shaped space by imaginatively placing the danger and stigma of prostitution elsewhere, imagining the street space a 'dangerous place' and positioning themselves against 'the (street) prostitute'. I also explored how the outdoor participants narrated the street as not one but many spaces, experienced differently depending on time, social location and personal biography. In the second section of the chapter I explored reconfigurations of the public/private and 'the privatization of public women'. I focused on the deterritorialization of prostitution from the street space, how online spaces of prostitution shape and are shaped by the dispositif of prostitution. I argued that online space(s) of prostitution is characterized by a constant interchange of smoothing and striating forces. It is both a space in which prostitution escapes the restrictions and boundaries of the largely striated space of street prostitution, a 'clean and shiny' space in which new meaning, new practices and new subjects have emerged, and a space shaped by striating market forces and heteronormativity.

As I stated in the beginning of the chapter, space/place configurations are central in the dispositif of prostitution. As discussed previously, 'the prostitute' has historically been symbolically important in defining the nature of public and private space. While women involved in prostitution were constructed as 'public women' and the sex of prostitution was constructed as contractual and instrumental, juxtaposed to the relational, intimate sexuality of the private sphere, the mainstreaming of the sex industry and the normalization of commercial sex has led to prostitution being reconstructed within the parameters of heterosexual romance relationships, within the landscape of heteronormality. New practices of prostitution, such as GFE, emulate 'private relationships' and are aimed at giving the impression of a mutual exchange of sexual intimacy. The mainstreaming of the sex industry entails an intersection of the dispositif of prostitution with the dispositif of neo-liberal market economy. Challenging the division between the public/private and commerce/intimacy, what is purchased within prostitution is no longer primarily made sense of as instrumental, contractual touch but also expressions of bodily and emotional intimacy.

The othering of women involved in prostitution has been tied to space. While all women involved in prostitution struggle with the social stigma attached to prostitution, not all are equally burdened by the whore stigma. Those whose prostitution practice most closely resembles non-commercial sexuality generally occupy a place of higher status than those engaged in less mystified forms of prostitution (Chapkis, 1997, p. 104). While the street space is overloaded with meaning and closely tied to the othering of 'the prostitute', the internet has offered a new space for a new subject to emerge. Bernstein argues that some women enter into prostitution in response to new subjectivities and social meanings that append to market mediated sex (Bernstein, 2007, p. 3). This seems to be true for some of the participants. By positioning themselves against 'the street prostitute' and by attempting to integrate an ethos of bodily pleasure, authenticity and intimacy in their prostitution practice, these women avoided to inscribe their prostitution practice as the stigmatized notion of the contractual, instrumental touch. Prostitution practices entailing a blurring between 'the public instrumental touch' and 'the private intimate touch' may in that sense be seen as both a result of the mainstreaming and gentrification of the sex industry and as a technology of resistance employed by individual women. By challenging the idea of relationships within prostitution as contractual, instrumental and devoid of emotion, by inscribing their experience within the parameters of conventional heterosexual romance relationships, these women also challenge their status as deviant, as outside of heteronormality.

The basic premise for this chapter was, as mentioned initially, that there is a definite relation between the kind of space the subject occupies and the form the subject takes. How one is spatially located in prostitution matters. However, neither the street space nor the online space of prostitution should be understood as a strictly bounded entity but as “*threatened, contaminated, stained and enriched by other spaces*” (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 442). Even when prostitution has been reframed as sex work and reterritorialized in ‘clean and shiny’ spaces, stigmatizing notions of prostitution as ‘gritty, dirty and dangerous’, or of women involved in prostitution as sexually indiscriminatory, disreputable and immoral, still echo in posts and discussion threads on forums and are present in their reversed forms as counter-discourse. By the same token, the street space is affected by the discourses and practices of online spaces of prostitution. Moreover subjects are not stationary but move between different spaces, some of the women had experience of both indoor and outdoor prostitution. The spatial experiences of prostitution may indeed vary immensely, from place to place but also from person to person. One place can contain many spaces and, depending on one’s emplacement, the same place can be experienced vastly differently. That the exchange of both sex and intimacy has expanded within the sex industry does not mean that all indoor prostitution aims at giving the impression of a mutual exchange of sexual intimacy. Far from all the participants engaged in indoor prostitution provide this type of more intimate form of erotic encounters. Indoor prostitution ranges from delimited and instrumental to more diffuse and expansive prostitution practices. Creating a binary opposition in which street prostitution is constructed as dangerous and indoor prostitution is constructed as safe, or street prostitution is constructed as instrumental and indoor prostitution is constructed as intimate, disregards the fact that street and indoor prostitution take different forms in different contexts and how the social location and personal biography of the individual impacts the prostitution practice and experience.



## 9. TACTICS – EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE

Viewing prostitution as a *dispositif*, entails not seeing it as transhistorical and acultural but rather as a constantly changing assemblage responding to the conditions of the present. In the previous chapter, I explored how the emergence and impact of the service economy, new technologies and changing norms regarding gender and sexuality has transformed the *dispositif* of prostitution. As the public/private has been reconfigured the binary constructions work/home, commerce/intimacy, market/sexuality have been challenged, and new meanings and practices within prostitution have emerged. At the same time as the deterritorialization of prostitution from the street space released smoothing forces altering the social meaning of prostitution, the sex industry is still largely structured by patriarchal and capitalist striating forces. Moreover, there are echoes from the past resonating in the present, constituting women involved in prostitution as immoral and disreputable subjects. The *dispositif* of prostitution thus constitutes a vast assemblage of competing and contradictory forces, forces which define, order and regulate people involved in it.

To be reterritorialized in the *dispositif* of prostitution entails entering into complex relations of power, domination and resistance. No matter how the participants themselves made sense of their involvement in prostitution, and despite their vastly different experiences, all their narratives spoke of how entering into prostitution involved experiences of being reterritorialized as ‘commodified body’, ‘appropriate target for violence/undeserving victim’ and ‘stigmatized identity’. In this chapter I will further explore the power, domination and resistance of the *dispositif* of prostitution by engaging with the participants’ narratives about the multitude of tactics they employed in order to negotiate, resist and destabilize power.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau (1984) theorizes *tactics* as a form of resistance in the micro-practices of everyday life. While *strategies* are employed by institutions and organizational power structures, such as states, municipalities, corporations and academia, *tactics* are, with the words of de Certeau (1984, p. 37), ‘an art of the weak’. Tactics are employed by the subjugated. While strategies are able to produce, organize and impose spaces, tactics can only adapt to, use and manipulate the spaces that strategies produce (de Certeau, 1984, p. 30). Tactics are both defensive and take advantage of opportunities. Rather than constituting an open and confrontational approach to institutionalized power they are constituted by ‘clever tricks’ and ‘isolated actions’, they are the covert everyday practices that, however, continuously negotiate, resist and destabilize power (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37).

By employing de Certeau’s notion of tactics as a tool, I will explore how the participants ‘made out’ in prostitution. While a few of the participants were involved in sex worker’s rights organizations or other political organizations struggling to change the conditions of prostitution, most of them did not express any interest in becoming involved in any form of formal politics. Rather, they engaged in informal and covert everyday practices of resistance.

Even if entering into prostitution inevitably entailed that the participants were reterritorialized within the dispositif of prostitution, their experiences of power, domination and possibility of resistance differed. Paul Patton argues that deterritorialization can take either negative or positive form: “*It is negative when the deterritorialized element is subjected to reterritorialisation that obstructs or limits its lines of flight, and it is positive when the lines of flight prevails over the forms of reterritorialisation and manages to connect with other deterritorialized elements in a manner that extends its trajectory*” (Patton, 2010, p. 143). While some of the participants’ deterritorializations took negative form, as experiences of violence and psychological distress turned their lines of flight into ‘lines of destruction’, others’ deterritorialization seemed to take a more positive form (Patton, 2000, p. 66-67). In the previous chapter I concluded that different experiences of prostitution cannot be reduced to simply a matter of one’s spatial location since one place may contain many spaces and may be experienced vastly differently. I also argued that the universalizing construction of outdoor prostitution as ‘dangerous’ and indoor prostitution as ‘safe’ disregards the particularities of the Swedish legislative and regulative context that entails that most women involved in indoor prostitution operate as independent escorts providing outcall services.

I argued that in order to understand the multiplicities of prostitution experience, one has to take into account not only different spatial locations but also how social location and personal biography affect one's experiences of prostitution. Sanders (2005) argues, in the same vein, that risk of physical violence and psychological distress within prostitution depends on a combination of reactions and responses by the individual and the external social, economic and cultural factors that shape the sex industry. Sanders argues, for example, that women who operate as escorts, seeing clients under isolated circumstances, all encounter a similar risk of being harmed. However, some individuals will be prone to taking risks, while others will avoid risks at all costs and so take precautions, deterrents and protection tactics to reduce risk. Sanders argues that risk within prostitution has to be understood as the outcome of a complex interplay between individual and social factors, interpersonal relationships and situations (Sanders, 2005, p. 42). With this insight as a starting point, I will explore how the different spatial and social locations, personal biographies and the conditions under which the participants engaged in prostitution, had an impact on how they were reterritorialized within the dispositif of prostitution, which tactics they employed and whether their prostitution experience was structured by relations of power or states of domination.

The chapter is structured in three sections, the first in which I explore tactics to manage emotion, the second which concerns tactics to manage violence, and the third in which I explore tactics to manage stigma.

### **9.1 Managing emotion**

The participants' narratives spoke of how being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed being reterritorialized as a 'commodified body'. Brewis and Linstead argue that being involved in an practice such as prostitution, in which the individual's person/body actually are integral to the service on offer, may pose a threat to self-identity (Brewis & Linstead, 2000, p. 208). In order to maintain a sense of self distinct from that involved in business arrangements, women involved in prostitution employ different tactics to separate their professional selves from their private selves. As mentioned in the previous chapter the maintenance of boundaries has been described as particular important in the lives of women involved in prostitution. Prostitution research has documented a multiplicity of distancing tactics, symbolical, physical and psychological, that women involved in prostitution employ in order to separate their professional selves from their private selves (Høigard & Finstad, 1986; O'Neill, 2001; Phoenix, 1999). In this

section I will explore the participants' narratives about the emotional impact of being reterritorialized as 'commodified body' and their different tactics to manage emotion. I will also explore how the participants social locations and personal biographies affected which emotion management tactics they employed and how successful they were.

### The construction of a separate prostitution identity

In order to separate the professional self from the private self most of the participants spoke of constructing a separate prostitution identity. The prostitution identity was created specifically for the prostitution practice and supported by a pseudonym and sometimes a fictitious life story. The participants spoke of the prostitution identity as both a tactic to protect the private self and the personal identity but also as a business strategy as they performed the prostitution identity in order to attract and maintain clients.

The pseudonym was an important marker of the demarcation of the private identity and the professional identity for many of the participants. Selma, who had only sold sex for some months when we first met, spoke of her struggle with creating and maintaining a separate prostitution identity:

S – In the beginning it was really hard for me to be... It was really hard for me to be like – Okay, my name is Jenny [pseudonym], and I will be Jenny and she is a prostitute, and what's that kind of person like? I won't walk around with a mini and stay ups! Well, I do wear stay ups but they are hidden... It was hard for me in the beginning, I'm starting to become more acquainted to her now...

A – Mm... so who is she, Jenny?

S – I don't know really... she is very happy, always happy and horny. She is always done up and sassy and chic, I'm pretty tired usually...and she is good at talking, I'm not really, or yes... I don't know. Really she's kind of me... I know that they say you have to be able to separate you as an escort and your private self... but sometimes I just feel like saying – I'm getting up early to go to work. I'm working as a waitress. I've taken a make-up artist course, just because I think it's so much fun! But nobody cares... But it's like... I have a hard time not to talk about myself if you know what I mean?

The importance of maintaining boundaries between the professional and private self was by most of the participants regarded as common sense. Selma narrated how she was struggling with constructing a separate prostitution identity. Jenny, her pseudonym, was both different and the same as her. Even though she had been

told about the importance of separating between the professional and private self she had urges to tell the clients about herself, not to pretend to be someone else.

The prostitution identity was made sense of both as a tactic to separate between the private and public self, to protect ones integrity and emotions, and as a business strategy, to attract and maintain clients. Alicia mainly made sense of her prostitution identity as a business strategy:

Alicia maybe avoids the boring topics a little more, she's always animated and happy and I'm a lot like that otherwise as well but... To be positive, I don't exactly bring my heaviest burdens or anything like that. Then it can be interesting to discuss things but Alicia is supposed to be happy and friendly and a ray of light in everyday life.

Alicia spoke of performing the prostitution identity as a business strategy, "*Alicia is supposed to be happy and friendly and a ray of light in everyday life*", that is how she attracts and maintains clients. In Sanders (2008b) study, *Paying for pleasure - men who buy sex*, she contends that the men she interviewed did not want the women from whom they bought sex to be vulnerable or at risk. The clients generally did not want to see women who they perceived were in danger, addicted to drugs or coerced by pimps. Rather they wanted the script of the women to be that of an: "*independent entrepreneur who had choice and control, even liked her work and her clients, and sometimes, particularly with them, received sexual pleasure, trust, loyalty and friendship*" (Sanders, 2008b, p. 411). Similar results were presented by Christine Milrod, in her study of sexual behavior, motives, and characteristics of clients who solicit escorts through a review website (Milrod & Monto, 2012). The respondents reported that the most attractive characteristics of an escort were a: 'happy and cheerful personality', closely followed by 'beautiful and healthy appearance' and 'acts like a girlfriend and not like a prostitute' (Milrod & Monto, 2012). Even though Sanders' and Milrod's studies concerned men who primarily bought sex from women involved in indoor prostitution, participants with experience of street prostitution expressed that clients generally had similar preferences. Veronika who had experience of both indoor and outdoor prostitution spoke of the wants and expectations of clients:

Many of the clients who I see place value in being able to talk to me. They don't care if I have a couple of extra kilos here and there. They think I'm nice, I enjoy talking to them and they enjoy talking to me and that means a lot...

Then you have to be in a good mood. If you're not you have to make sure that you appear to be because no one wants to see someone who is down and sad... That's something I noticed on the street as well, if it was cold and I had a red nose I didn't get any clients, it looked like I had been crying and they don't... They want that kick that you get from a happy person, a person that is lively and positive, it's contagious.

Veronika's assertion that "*no one wants to see someone who is down and sad*" is illustrative of how most of the participants' spoke of the preferences of clients. In their narratives it appeared as if most clients preferred the script of the women to be that of the independent entrepreneur who likes her work and her clients and preferably takes pleasure in the sexual encounters. Someone with whom paid sex can take the shape of an exchange of mutual sexual intimacy. This entailed that most of the participants' prostitution practice not merely entailed granting physical access to their bodies or providing sexual services but also the emotional labor of displaying certain emotions.

### Emotional labor

Prostitution scholars have drawn heavily on Arlie Hochschild's seminal work on *emotional labor* in exploring how emotion and feeling are created, disciplined and performed in prostitution. In *The managed heart*, Hochschild (1983) introduces the concept of emotional labor to describe the process by which workers in the service economy are expected to manage their own and others feelings in accordance to work-related rules and norms. Hochschild theorizes emotional labor as "*the management of feeling to create a publically observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value*" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). A person who is carrying out emotional labor manages his/her own feelings as a way to create a particular emotional state in another person, often a state of well-being and affirmation (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7).

Hochschild denaturalizes emotion by theorizing it as a product of socialization rather than a biologically and genetically determined reaction. As emotion is seen as always already social it can be performed, created, objectified and exchanged (Chapkis, 1997, p.73). In performing and creating emotion Hochschild separates between *surface acting*, that focuses on what is publically displayed, and *deep acting*, that entails an attempt to alter what is privately felt (Wharton, 2009, p. 149). In surface acting we deceive others about how we feel, but do not

deceive ourselves, while in deep acting we create or summon emotions which are experienced as real to both the other and the self. All the participants spoke of engaging in some form of emotional labor.

Prostitution did, for most of the participants, entail catering to the clients' emotional as well as sexual needs. As Sonja stated in the previous chapter, most clients did not simply want to 'fuck' but were looking to *feel* a certain way. In order to create the desired emotional state in the client, most of the participants engaged in surface acting.

Even though Maria spoke of attempts to integrate an ethos of bodily pleasure, intimacy and authenticity in her prostitution practice, the conditions of her interaction with clients were affected by the commodified character of the relationship and pushed her to employ tactics of surface acting.

M - There are so many stories. Many want to talk, at least if you open up for it. And if they don't talk before sex, because then they might be a little nervous, they talk after. Oh, how they talk. You just lay there and cuddle a bit and give them a little bit of body contact and they talk, talk, talk.

A - Is it mutual somehow, can you talk about yourself and your life story?

M - No, I can't. I have to maintain this illusion that I'm doing it because I think it's so much fun, you know like - It kind of turns me on and you know it's my thing. Which it wasn't from the start and it isn't, it isn't my thing. Honestly if the money would be rolling in I wouldn't even have had the energy to get into the shower. So it's crass in that sense. But if you don't maintain that illusion they won't book you again.

Maria spoke of how she was unable to talk freely with clients about herself and her experiences as she had to maintain the illusion that her involvement in prostitution was the result of a 'free choice' and a preference, when it really was not.

O'Connell Davidson (1998) argues that clients pay women involved in prostitution to 'be a person who is not a person', a person who is 'physically alive' but 'socially dead'. However, in order to achieve the validation needed the person has to *appear* to be socially alive, if not, she ceases to exist as an other who can give validation. Surface acting was employed in order to mystify the commodified character of relationships with clients. Jenna spoke of different 'tricks' she used to appear 'socially alive' in order to be able to validate the clients.

J – ... You have your little tricks to make them come back so that you will get your regular income, you have to have that...

A – What kind of tricks?

J – They usually ask me if I do this often and then I always give them these standard answers:

– No it's been months since last!

– Really has it?

– Yes, you've noticed I don't answer the phone haven't you? Or –Didn't you notice how tight I am, I hardly have any sex!

– True! So that's really how it is?

And then they feel special – She answered when I called. It's always about making them feel special, then they're like - I'm special, I want to see her again because with her I'm special. Or when they say – What time is it? Has an hour passed yet? – Yes, but I don't set any alarm. Why would I? I'm not expecting anyone else. (...) You make them feel like a man, you learn to find something positive in all of them, no matter how ugly or disgusting they are... and when they come and they are really fat, like 120 kilos you go – God you're so big! (in an admiring tone) Look at your hands! That's what they need, validation, to feel like a man, [validation] from someone who really looks like a woman.

Jenna spoke of the different 'tricks' she used in order to disguise the commodified character of relationships with clients. By creating the illusion that the client was one out of a few who was chosen, she appeared to be 'socially alive' and was thereby able to validate him and create the emotional state he desired.

Therese spoke of clients' need for validation as a need for a 'refuge', the emotional labor involved in prostitution did for her entail to embody that 'refuge':

Some want to talk, have a massage, have sex of course, that's why they are there. But more like to have a secret room where they can come, where they pay to be in the center of attention, to have their own little refuge, and then I get to be that refuge. I don't think they think about me being at work and that I would much rather be on vacation.

The commodified character of relationships with clients required that the participants suppressed their own feelings in order to express care, concern and consideration for the client. What separates emotional labor from the *emotion work* that is carried out in private relationships is that emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). However the

commodified caring that the participants spoke of, mirrored the gendered emotion work traditionally carried out by women in private relationships. Hochschild (1983) argues that emotion work is gendered. Actions that are concerned with the enhancement of others' emotional well-being and with providing emotional support such as offering encouragement and validation, showing appreciation, listening closely to what someone has to say, and expressing empathy with another person's feelings, are central to the construction of femininity (Erickson, 2005). Women have been held accountable for the performance of emotion as they have been expected to be the emotional care taker. Suppressing their own feelings in order to care for the clients' emotional needs often mirrored the emotion work that the participants carried out in private relationships.

### Different tactics to manage emotion

As I stated in the beginning of the section, being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed that the participants were reterritorialized as 'commodified bodies'. For most of the participants this entailed creating a separate prostitution identity and engaging in emotional labor in the form of surface acting, displaying certain emotions to attract and maintain relationships with clients. Hochschild (1983, p. 90) suggests that engaging in emotional labor threatens to produce what she terms 'emotive dissonance'. Persons who are required to display certain emotions regardless of whether these are congruent with their feelings may over time develop a sense of self-estrangement and psychological distress.

Because of the deep connection between emotion and the self, Hochschild suggests that those who perform emotional labor are vulnerable to a range of identity-related issues that negatively affect their psychological well-being (Wharton, 2009, p. 159). In order to protect themselves from psychological distress and emotional harm the participants employed a number of different emotion management tactics such as: identity management tactics, physical distancing tactics, space-time tactics, deep acting tactics and tactics of separating the body from the self.

In Chapter Eight I touched briefly on physical distancing tactics (dividing the body into public and private regions) when I analyzed Sara's narrative about excluding kissing from her prostitution practice. Sara spoke of physical encounters with clients as 'sex but not sex, sex as work'. Maria who as opposed to Sara provided GFE services and did not use physical distancing tactics still rationalized her engagement in more intimate forms of erotic exchange with clients from a business perspective:

M – Most of them want to kiss, most of them want to kiss.

A – How do you feel about that?

M – About what, kissing?

A – Yes.

M – I think it's okay... it's also something you can charge more for. If you only can offer your vagina and is like don't – Don't touch me, you can't touch me in any way and you can't kiss me, you can't give cunnilingus I guess it's worth less. Most clients want me to have a good time, I genuinely feel like they do. If they want that illusion you have to act a little bit... You might also have to think... I rarely think people are disgusting... I've never experienced that a person has been dirty or anything, most of them are really meticulous when it comes to their hygiene, they have just showered. Then at times I might not find the person particularly attractive. But I rarely feel like people are disgusting and it reminds me of... If I compare it to other jobs that I've had it reminds me of when I was working as a carer and things like that when I was studying. So it's about care... Then that sex is in the picture is another thing, it is not really sex in the same way to me...

Even though Maria did not employ physical distancing tactics she still, similarly to Sara, made sense of physical encounters with clients as 'sex but not sex, sex as work'. She compared sex in prostitution with other care work she had experience of.

Many of the participants who employed physical distancing tactics also employed identity management tactics, with clear boundaries between their private and professional self and space-time tactics (performing the prostitute role/identity within certain times and spaces). Generally these participants spoke of the importance of being professional and of setting and maintaining boundaries, boundaries to what to do and not to do, how often to do it and with whom to do it. Sonja made sense of setting and maintaining strict boundaries as a way to protect herself from feeling violated:

If you don't draw these boundaries you risk that men violates you just because you don't have the sense to say no, to say that you don't want to do it. It doesn't necessarily mean that the men were planning on doing that, I mean hurting you, but they will because you don't really want to do it.

Many of these participants also spoke of the importance of not seeing too many clients. Sonja briefly mentioned how she felt during a period when she saw more clients:

I used to see more clients for a while before and I didn't feel good doing that... Then it was more like sex got too common and somehow you felt like you were some kind of automatic machine, put in the money up there and the dick down there. (laughs)

Most of the participants described employing physical distancing tactics, identity management tactics and space-time tactics as a part of managing emotion. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, some participants described attempting to integrate an ethos of bodily pleasure, intimacy and authenticity in their prostitution practice.

Selma, Alicia, Eva, Rebecca, Sonja, Maria and Maya all, to different degrees, spoke of attempting to integrate an ethos of bodily pleasure in their prostitution practice. The deep acting tactics that these participants employed were efforts to evoke rather than feign emotions. These participants in general stressed less the importance of maintaining boundaries between the professional and private self. They were also in general critical of the notion of prostitution as work, some of them described prostitution as a hobby. Eva, who you might remember made sense of her involvement in prostitution as a way for her to have casual sex without risking any further involvement, was critical of the notion of prostitution as a form of work:

I think people who say that [that prostitution is like any other kind of work] are people who don't know, or people who are in it but have blocked off their emotional life completely. That's a risk if you don't do this right or in a balanced way... right and wrong I can't say anything about that, but balance. I believe, I say *believe* now I want to stress that, that most women who do this don't want to have it as a regular job because then you're forced to do it. To have it as a regular job, to wake up in the morning and do it, then you have to be detached somehow, you must just do it mechanically to support yourself.

Even though Eva made sense of her involvement in prostitution as part of her sexuality, she stated that she was not attracted to the majority of the clients she saw. In an effort to still experience physical pleasure Eva spoke of how she prepared herself before she saw a client:

E – ... it would be really strange if I was turned on by all the men that I met. It's impossible. Really it's just a little fraction that I really get turned on by. So sure it happens that I see men I wouldn't have slept with if it wasn't for the money,

it happens. But I don't think about it, sure I do it for me but I don't rip other people off just so that I can feel good, it's for other people to feel good and for me to feel good is a bonus.

A – Okay.

E – And then I focus, I always sit for a while before and prepare myself mentally, there is always something beautiful in everyone... I can notice... It could be someone who isn't particularly attractive physically but maybe he has a really nice voice or maybe he has really good hands... maybe he touches in a certain way and then I focus on that... I've never met anybody who made me think – Ick! Never, it has never happened! Then there are some that you long to see, but like I said it would be strange if you were turned on by everyone.

By focusing on 'what is beautiful' in the person who she saw Eva attempted to summon sexual feelings rather than feigning them. The deep acting that Eva and some of the other participants engaged in could be seen as a tactic to manage emotion, a tactic to avoid the emotive dissonance that mainly is caused by surface acting. By engaging emotionally and sexually with the clients and attempting to derive sexual pleasure from the sexual interaction these participants resisted being constituted as a passive sexual object or commodity. Selma for example spoke of the importance for her to engage sexually with clients:

I'm not just a hole, I'm more than that. They will notice when we meet because I'm not cold, lying there with closed eyes, the lights turned off, staring at the ceiling. I want to be able to enjoy it too, otherwise I could never do it... I think that that's when you start to feel bad, if you are turned into a commodity... I never want to feel like that.

Many of these participants narrated about attempts to create a situation that entailed mutual sexual pleasure, despite the lack of mutual physical attraction. Selma narrated how she tried to 'do it right' by engaging sexually with clients rather than feigning sexual pleasure.

I'm not the kind of person that will pretend moaning while having sex, that doesn't give either one of us anything, then it's better to do it right. So no I don't [act] in the sense that if I'm in a sexual situation then I try to make the best of it...

Rebecca also spoke of the importance of integrating an ethos of bodily pleasure in the prostitution practice.

You commit violence to yourself if you do this without enjoying sex. If you do this to be mean to yourself or just for the money but really don't like the sex then you do yourself a big disservice. You will have huge problems with sex later on if that's the case. You have to like it, if not one hundred percent of what you do but you have to like very much of what you do.

While some of the participants attempted to battle psychological distress and emotive dissonance by engaging emotionally and sexually with the clients, other participants had an opposite tactic, a tactic of separating the body from the self by dissociation. Dissociation from the body entails a detachment from physical and emotional reality. Leaving the body emotionally when it is impossible to leave it physically is a well-documented reaction to trauma and is understood as a psychological defense mechanism (Coy, 2009, p. 68). By switching off/shutting down these participants attempted to manage their emotions.

Nadia spoke of being able to shut down as an essential mechanism for her involvement in prostitution. After she decided to start to sell sex, she and Farrah came to an agreement, Farrah would protect Nadia and Nadia would give her a percentage of the money she made in prostitution:

We had a strategy, her and I and she wanted a certain percentage of what I sold for. I didn't want to be raped again, never again. (...) Often it was me they wanted to buy, so even if they were two, I was the one who had to take care of everything. I had to blow somebody at the same time as somebody else entered me and stuff like that... Maybe there are people who find that comfortable, fine, but to me it sure wasn't, especially not in that context. I can't say that I... It wasn't any fun, I felt really bad and I was very shut down... And yes... I had... I guess it was while I was selling myself... As difficult it was to shut down, to be as shut down as I was back then, because I needed to... As soon as I got the technique to shut down, which you have to because at times it actually hurts. If a client has paid... Sometimes it doesn't hurt but at other times it does and then in a second, real quickly, you have to be able to shut down the pain. Depending on how active you are... during some periods it's easier and during others more difficult but once you've got the technique you can do it and it's a good feeling. Not a good feeling in that sense, because the sex is crap from my perspective, but it's really nice to be shut down. To not have to feel the other sorrow you have from abuse, rapes, people who die, friends who don't care and all of that you carry around... And unfortunately prostitution is something that makes you

think that this whole shutting down thing is a means to survive the profession, but then it turns into to survive living with yourself and all your pain...

Nadia spoke of how being able to shut down, which initially was a prerequisite for her involvement in prostitution, eventually turned into a necessity to be able to live at all, to manage the pain. Therese also spoke of dissociation as a central part of her emotion management. As opposed to Nadia she spoke of shutting down not as a new technique learnt in prostitution but rather as something she had learnt as a child:

T – I think I had to shut down or how to put it, go elsewhere, for the first time when I was four or five. And then you can cope, when you do that. You shut down and you're not there and it almost takes for someone to wake you up, I mean the person who has abused you has to wake you up because you're not there. And if you have to do that a lot, in the end you're so shut down that it's a state, it becomes part of who you are... It's part of your behavior. I was there when I met clients until the sex then I shut down and he got to do his thing and then you can take all these things you're called and all of that. You think all along that you have a plan for how to handle this, you just don't realize, or I didn't realize what it did to me...

(...) I can shut down at any point, I get like completely zombiefied, I don't need any painkillers or anything, if there's a real crises I can do it all on my own. I don't need any booze or anything, no help I can go there... Because I have done it a lot and for long times and since it makes me so sad...

A – Yes

T – It's not something I should do.

A – No

T – And at the same time it's a natural part of me, I mean when something happens. If I picture myself in that situation again, well, it's just to shut down. I guess there are people who don't even know what I'm talking about. – What do you mean shut down? If you have sex with someone you feel it. – No, not necessarily... what's... How can I put it... What makes it so hard to talk about this is that I realize how much it's part of who I am, how much it's part of what I can do or do and it hurts to think about myself as little...

A – Yes I understand...

T – I mean, what's now, or I mean this whole prostitution thing, that's hard too, but I can distance myself a little from that. – That's how I did it, those were the tricks that I used. But shit, if I have to be four years old again then it's a knife straight in to my heart. (laughs)

Therese linked surviving sexual abuse in childhood with dissociating from the body. Dissociation should here be understood as a coping mechanism that enabled her to survive the abuse she was subjected to as a child as well as a tactic employed to manage her emotions in prostitution.

### Tactics depending on social location and personal biography

In her book on risk and risk management within indoor prostitution in the UK, Sanders (2005a, p. 75) argues that the women she interviewed created what she terms a 'hierarchy of harms' in which certain types of dangers were prioritized depending on their perceived consequences and perceived degree of control over these dangers. Health risks for example, were perceived as one of the more controllable aspects of prostitution. Physical harm caused by clients was deemed more unpredictable and called for continuous assessment and screening in order to avoid risk. The risk that the women in Sanders study were most concerned about was, despite the prevalence of violence and risk management tactics developed in order to respond to it, not physical harm but rather emotional and psychological harm (Sanders, 2005a, p. 45). The emotional consequences of prostitution are not like the physical consequences confined to the time and space of encounters with clients but potentially extend past that, invading the private sphere, the flesh and blood body and the self.

In Ine Vanwesenbeeck's study on the health and well-being of women involved in prostitution, she concludes that while women involved in prostitution generally are significantly more likely than other women to report experiences of psychological distress, not all women fare equally bad in prostitution (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994, p. 147). Vanwesenbeeck found that trauma prior to entering into prostitution, violence from clients, suppression of feelings, financial need, and unprotected working conditions all contributed significantly to impaired psychological health. I would like to argue that the different emotion management tactics and their perceived effectiveness were related both to the participants' social location and their personal biographies.

The participants whose prostitution practice was aimed at giving the impression of a mutual exchange of sexual intimacy often engaged in deep acting tactics attempting to integrate an ethos of bodily pleasure, intimacy and authenticity in their prostitution practice. The participants who had a more instrumental approach to prostitution were more inclined to engage in surface acting and stressed more the importance of physical distancing tactics, identity management tactics and space-time tactics to manage emotion. The participants' personal

biographies also had an impact on what kind of emotion management tactics they employed. Some of the participants who had been subjected to sexual abuse spoke of dissociation as a tactic to manage emotion. All of the participants who spoke of dissociation as an emotion management tactic had experiences of sexual abuse, however not all the participants who had experiences of sexual abuse dissociated.

Depending on their social location and personal biography the participants were more or less equipped to create effective emotion management tactics. The participants who were the most vulnerable to emotional harm were the ones who were not able to control the conditions under which they engaged in prostitution and the ones who, for different reasons, often related to their personal biographies, had a hard time to set and maintain boundaries in the interaction with clients. Participants who made sense of their entry into prostitution as a result of them having been constituted as a sexual being for others and who spoke of dissociation as central to their prostitution practice generally seemed to fare worse. Previous research indicates a correlation between child sexual abuse, dissociation and experiences of psychological distress in prostitution (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). Despite a wide-ranging set of emotion management tactics, most of the participants described emotion management as precarious and not always effective. Some of the participants told stories about experiences of emotion management tactics failing.

### When emotion management tactics fail

Some of the participants told stories about experiences of emotion management tactics failing. I will explore two of these stories. While Selma told a story about deep acting tactics failing, Therese's story was a story of no longer being able to separate the body from the self.

When I met Selma for our first interview she had sold sex for about three months. Overall her narrative was positive in regards to her experiences of prostitution, even though she did speak of how she struggled to create and maintain a separate prostitution identity and how she often had urges to tell clients about 'herself'. When we met for our second interview almost a month and a half later, I asked Selma if there was anything in particular she had thought about since we met last, she answered:

S – No... I think I was a little bit more positive towards this whole sex selling thing when we met last.

A – Mhm?

S – I think you have some sort of honeymoon phase and I think mine is over.

A – Mm. When did it end?

S – Ehm, I'm not sure maybe a month ago or so...

A – Okay, was it something that happened?

S – No, nothing has happened, I've only met people who've been nice and respectful but still it just feels disgusting. (...) For a while I felt like I had a lot of fun, it was easy, it was fun to dress up and meet someone... Now it just feels burdensome, it's not fun to meet people anymore and other things, like sex with my boyfriend... I don't even feel like having sex with him.

A – Yes, ehm... and now that you think back of what was before do you see it in a different light now, now that you have this feeling of it not feeling good or do you think it was good until it wasn't anymore?

S – No, I mean, I thought it was... I think I've tried to convince myself all along... I know I've had several break downs but then I've thought – It's because of other things, it doesn't have anything to do with this! I tried to convince myself but now I realize that it never felt right and it hasn't felt good and I don't think it does for anyone really. Because you're nothing but... They don't know who *I* am! I am someone else. It's hard to play this role all the time and it has affected me as a person too. It's been hard for me to be myself even when I'm with my friends. To not be the way I am when I'm with these guys and it feels... I just need some distance to it all!

Selma was trying to make sense of the emotional turmoil she experienced as we were talking. While she initially stated that her feelings had changed, that she at first felt like prostitution was “*fun and easy*” but that it, with time, turned into something “*burdensome and disgusting*”, she soon second-guessed herself, stating that she had tried to convince herself that she was “*okay with it*”.

S – I've said – It's okay, it's not that bad, I could have met with these guys under other circumstances as well. But really I *never* could have!

A – Right.

S – They are men my dad's age, it's just gross!

A – What do you think made it possible for you to do it and convince yourself that it was okay, that it felt okay?

S – The money. I mean you say.... I mean there are many who say that the money doesn't matter. That's a lie. Of course it was the money! But when I think about the last time we met, I feel like I was sitting here doubting and lying to myself, I was like – Hold on, I'm supposed to think it's good! Really, it's good Selma, you like this!

In order to manage her emotions, Selma engaged in deep acting tactics, attempting to change, not merely the way she appeared to feel, but the way she actually felt. She narrated how she was overtaken by ambivalent feelings, during our first interview, and how she had to remind herself – “*I’m supposed to think it’s good!*” *Really, it’s good Selma, you like this!*” Hochschild (1983) defines deep acting as “*the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling.*” As stated before, deep acting tactics differ from the emotional control or suppression that characterises surface acting. Deep acting entails both the act of evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing feeling in oneself. The emotional labor is the act of trying to evoke or change an emotion, regardless of whether it succeeds or fails. Hochschild (1979, p 561) argues that even when emotion management fails it still reveals what ‘ideal formulations’ or ‘feeling rules’ that guided the attempt. Feeling rules, what Hochschild refers to as ‘the bottom side of ideology’, are the the conventions of feelings, what one is ‘supposed’ to feel in a certain situation. As the division between public/private, market/sexuality and commerce/intimacy has been challenged and the social meaning of prostitution has changed, so have the feeling rules. The feeling rules that guided Selma’s deep acting tactics were the feeling rules of the online spaces in which she was introduced to prostitution. In these spaces, the feeling rules have shifted from the modern prostitution imperative to feign emotions with clients and the view on feelings of lust or pleasure in encounters with clients as inappropriate and expressions of unprofessionalism, to the postindustrial prostitution imperative to approach prostitution with an ethos of bodily pleasure, intimacy and authenticity. Selma’s deep acting tactics were thus largely attempts to like the encounters with clients, to evoke feelings of sympathy and pleasure.

Hochschild argues that deep acting often is aided by setting up an ‘emotion work system’ in which other people are involved in reinforcing the particular view or feelings one is trying to evoke. Hochschild thereby suggests that emotion work can be done by the self upon the self, by the self upon others and by others upon the self. For Selma the online space of prostitution worked as emotion work system. In this space she presented herself as someone who took pleasure in prostitution and talked to others who also did. After some time, she introduced one of her friends to prostitution and then she became an important part of her emotion work system. Selma and her friend spent a lot of time on the forums and talking about prostitution.

Selma stated that her deep acting tactics had failed before, however, when it had happened she had tried to convince herself that her feelings were caused by other things rather than her involvement in prostitution.

S – One time I broke down when I was at this guy’s place and then I went into the bathroom and just cried a lot and kind of had a panic attack... and then my friend was there as well and I just told her that we had to leave and then I went home and lay in my bed for three days, it usually lasts for three days... so then you lay there (laughs).

A – Mm.

S – And then you get up again.

A – Mm... and then... what did you think then... did you think that it didn’t have anything to do with that [prostitution] or did you have to try to convince yourself that was the case?

S – I’m sorry, what do you mean? My brain was somewhere else. (laughs)

A – Did you think - It’s not really about me selling sex, that’s not why I’m breaking down right now, or did you have to try to convince yourself that was the case?

S – I feel more like I had to try to convince myself that that wasn’t what it was about, but then somehow I was like – Hold up, I don’t want to do this, and I said... I was drunk and I told her [the friend] that – I don’t want to do this! And the day after she asked me what I meant and I was like – Ehm, drink wine... Because I didn’t want to show her that I didn’t... I wanted to appear to be strong.

In Selma’s narrative it appears as if her deep acting tactics entailed an attempt to change the way she felt in quality rather than in degree. Hochschild avoids the term ‘manipulating’ feelings since it suggests a shallowness. Selma clearly wanted to feel differently about encounters with clients but was unable to evoke feelings to support her continued involvement in prostitution. Selma spoke of how since her emotion management tactics failed, she had not been able to meet with clients. She had booked ‘dates’ that she later had to cancel as she could not bring herself to go through with them. While she previously had attempted to convince herself that she was fine with seeing clients, it was as if she used our second interview to confirm to herself that she no longer wanted to continue. For Selma the failure of emotion management tactics entailed that she decided to exit prostitution.

While Selma narrated how her tactics of deep acting had failed, allowing for a lot of unwanted feelings to arise, making it impossible for her to see clients and ultimately leading to her exiting prostitution, Therese, who employed tactics of separating the self from the body told a different story. Therese described her entry into prostitution as a line of flight, a way to achieve her own 'lockable haven'. In the back of her mind she made connections between prostitution and the sexual abuse she was subjected to as a child but she pushed those thoughts aside.

T – I had found a way to make money, a job that I mastered. Ever since I was little I had to learn how to submit, to get on peoples good side, to be smart and to get away with things. It's like... it was just like I had been trained to do it, it took somebody with my psyche to do it. I knew all the tricks, it was just age and getting paid that was the difference really. (...) The only difference is that this time, I'm in control. Damn, I'm cool! I can do this. I'm making money. I can't manage an ordinary job, I break down when I'm under stress or when I'm yelled at by my boss, or yelled at sounds a little extreme but you know... I can't interact with ordinary people, sex doesn't work with them, but this I master. (...) My own clever way of making money. Everyone can't do this, but I surely can.

A – Was there some pride in it too in some way?

T – I had to take pride in it because there was so much that I had done that I couldn't take any pride in because I always failed. All of a sudden it was like – I can do this. I've could ever since I was little, god how tragic, let's not think about that, let's go!

At first Therese experienced control in her interaction with clients. Therese was mostly selling sex from her apartment. She had different tactics to manage to separate between her private self and her professional self. For example she employed space-time tactics. She had a closet in her apartment where she put away her work stuff, clothes and equipment, after seeing a client. After a while the space-time tactics started to fail, she spoke of how it got harder and harder to get the work to 'stay in the closet'.

Well literally the stuff was still in the closet but I more and more became the kind of girl who sells herself. And like I said, it takes over your existence. In the end you can no longer shield yourself from it. You close the front door, lock it, close the blinds, count the money and clean up but you are... It infects you in a way that I wasn't prepared for... that it would affect my psyche, that I would get so pulled into it. In the beginning, I saw it as an act, getting paid

and then I'll continue on with my ordinary life. It was alright, in the beginning I could even be happy about it. When I met friends I could buy them stuff. What I hadn't put away for rent I could use to buy food for friends that didn't have money. It was fun, I was feeling good, I felt like I was doing something useful and then I didn't anymore.

As time went on Therese's line of flight was cut short and she was reterritorialized in relations of power and domination:

It wasn't until some time had passed that I started to break down in that to, I agreed on doing worse things, I was paid less, I was confused when somebody tried to trick me and I had horrible nightmares. They were so horrible that I didn't dare to fall asleep... They were so grotesque that I thought, how can I have this in me, how can I dream these things? It was stuff I had experienced but a hundred times worse, there were infants and men and violence and I realized that it was all connected somehow, but it got so dark and so messy. I don't even remember the days separately... sometimes I can point to something... that it must have been about that month because I remember that there was a whole lot of fucking snow, my feet were wet when I was picked up. But I can't point to anything more specific and like I said before, it was more and more difficult for me to shut down and be normal when I closed the door. I was shut down and then all of a sudden I was there and there's somebody there on top of you, groaning, holding you down and all of a sudden you get these flashing images of yourself exactly like that only that then you were only this tall [shows about a meter above the ground]. And, awh, it hurts so much to remember. It's so hard to remember the stuff from when I was little and it's so hard to see little girls in the city, cute girls, blond, curly haired, running around with a McDonald's balloon around a fountain or something... Some days I can't stand it, because I can't understand how you could do something like that. And it's difficult because I used to be just like that. It hurts so bad! So I could make the parallels but it got even stronger with time, but it wasn't until I had been in therapy that I realized that, okay, there's no difference, I'm just older now...

Therese spoke of how her experience of prostitution changed from the beginning where she exercised and experienced control over what she then made sense of as work, to the end where she spoke of herself as 'infected' by prostitution, no longer being able to manage her emotions, resulting in her being broke down and exploited. Therese's narrative is another example of emotion management failing. While most of the participants generally spoke of being able to manage

their emotions in prostitution, many of them described instances in which emotion management were not effective. In Therese's narrative the relationship between emotion management tactics and tactics to manage violence becomes obvious. When emotion management tactics fail, it is also more difficult to uphold boundaries and protect oneself from violence. And the other way around, when or after one is subjected to violence, it becomes more difficult to manage emotion. In the following section I will explore the participants' narratives about physical risk and their tactics to manage violence.

## 9.2 Managing violence

Being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entails the risk of being subjected to violence. O'Connell Davidson (1998, p. 63) argues that the striking difference between prostitution and mainstream employment lie in the significant likelihood of women involved in prostitution being robbed, attacked, raped or even killed. Prostitution is a violent and dangerous occupation, marking it out as one of the most precarious ways of making money (Sanders, 2005a, p. 40). O'Connell Davidson (1998, p. 64) points out that while there are other professionals such as plumbers, sales personnel and estate agents, who enter houses alone to meet strangers, only in prostitution is it prevalent that if a client is unhappy he will beat, rape or murder the service provider, she concludes, because "*there is no popular moral doctrine which tolerates hostility towards 'dirty plumbers' only 'dirty whores.'*" The participants all spoke of the risk of violence that prostitution entailed, many of their stories were connected to the construction of 'the prostitute' as an 'appropriate target for violence'/undeserving victim. In analyzing the hostility and violence the participants narrated, I have turned to Sara Ahmed's (2004a) thoughts on the organization of hate.

In her work on the sociality of emotion, Ahmed (2004a) speaks of how emotion operates in the creation of an economy of difference, in the differentiation between those who can and those who cannot be loved, those who can and those who cannot be grieved, and ultimately between legitimate and illegitimate lives. In exploring how emotion is bound up with, what she refers to as, 'the sticky' relations between signs and bodies Ahmed argues that signs become sticky through repetition, she also argues that the stickiness of the sign concerns the relation or contact with other signs. In Chapter Five I discussed how 'the prostitute', by the dividing practices of regulationist discourse, was constructed as different from other women. The sign, 'the prostitute', became sticky through its repetition in regulationist discourse and practice and through its contact with

other signs such as ‘the whore’, ‘the working class woman’, and its association with ‘dirt’, ‘danger’ and ‘immorality’. As an ‘unchaste woman’ ‘the prostitute’ was constructed as a body who could not be loved, who could not be grieved. ‘The prostitute’ was consequently placed outside the protection of the law as an illegitimate life.

Ahmed (2004a, p. 9) relates ‘stickiness’ with historicity in arguing that stickiness is an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects and signs. The perception of others causing an emotional response is not simply a person’s perception, but involves a form of contact between that person and others, shaped by histories of contact (Ahmed, 2004b). Ahmed (2004a, p. 44) argues that emotions not only move sideways, through the ‘sticky associations’ between signs and bodies, but also forwards and backwards in time, as she states “*repression always leaves its traces in the present – hence what sticks is bound up with the absent presence of historicity.*” The absent presence of historicity entails that ‘the prostitute’ still evoke feelings of hostility, disgust or hatred in some, no matter if the idea to which these feelings was first connected is absent in the present, the feelings remain.

The participants told numerous stories about how being reterritorialized as ‘prostitute’ entailed being subjected to threats and acts of violence. Elena who entered into prostitution in her early teens had gone from having little control over her involvement in prostitution, being controlled by her cousin and later on by an older man who functioned as her pimp, to taking her first own steps into prostitution. When Elena was eighteen she started working at a massage parlor in Copenhagen an, in one sense, much more sheltered space:

E – ...I got a different perspective on this business.

A – In what way?

E – Well, in all the different ways things can be done. I went from being incredibly dirty out there in the woods with these men, you know it was simply dangerous, to working in a place where there is an alarm button by every bed and every exit, if you push it the police will be there in like five minutes. And to having rules, to differentiate between whores and whores, you know – We don’t accept girls from the street. That’s the first thing I was told and I was supposed to feel lucky for getting a job there despite the fact I’m black. It wasn’t something they wanted but I was so special that they decided to make an exception and I was practically Swedish which they liked... But that whole

thing... I've never been to a model agency but I think they differentiate in a similar way, you are high fashion and then there is commercial, you know a little like that... So we were, we had annual reviews and Christmas parties, it was pretty bizarre. I was still able to see it from outside somehow and it was bizarre.

Elena's narrative takes us from the 'dirty' and 'dangerous' outdoor spaces that constituted her first experience of prostitution to the professionalised and 'safe' space of the massage parlor. Despite the fact that Elena was more physically protected and reconstructed as a 'classy' subject in her new work environment, the risk of violence prevailed. Elena tells a story of how the sticky relations between the sign of 'the prostitute' and her body led to a dangerous encounter and a traumatizing event.

E – I had started to hang out with a girl whose name was Sandra. She worked as an escort, not at a massage parlor, she just went places. It was not all she did and I could tell she had a different light in her eyes than what I did back then. All we did down there was to party and I was there for longer and longer periods since I lived with my boyfriend. But so when it all changed... When you're working, the aim is not to be victimized. Even though it happens, and it has happened during all these years and it has happened often, the aim still is for it not to happen. I thought I was safe. I knew outcalls were one of the first things we were told not to do and I knew it, but it was the receptionist who... and I needed some extra money. I hadn't made a lot that night and it bugged me because you had to pay five-hundred crowns to the receptionist and then six-hundred per shift so it was one-thousand-one-hundred just for renting the room. A few times I had gone home without really having made any money. To put yourself in debt is not fun and you feel like you want something for yourself as well because you have spent money on the ticket going there, I used to catch the bus to get there. So I did it and it's really strange that this hasn't happened more often than it has. So we had this call and it was the last before we closed and I was to take a taxi and it's great when the client pays for the taxi. Everything was so easy, so I grabbed my sleep over bag and... I feel a little dizzy is it really bright in here?

A – Yes, it is quite bright, do you want to go and sit in another room?

E – Yes, can we?

(Pause)

E – So I got this extra job and it felt like it was pretty far outside of Copenhagen...

We were in the car for about thirty minutes before we got there. A man opens the door, he looks really nice, it's a nice neighborhood, it's five o'clock in the morning but still... he takes my bag and I follow him into the living room and there's another guy, there had been no talk of them being two. (...) That was a bit of a turning point for me. That was the last drop... I'm impressed with how strong one's survival instinct is, but I have, I had... I know it's part of the job. Rape is part of the prostitution job. Then it's not something you want or something you can charge for but it's something you always have to keep in mind. Yet you work so hard for it not to happen... I did ask what he sounded like, because that's something I look for myself, the least bit of indication that he has a problem with understanding boundaries and he's out of the picture. And it's... I usually think of this as one of the more brutal rapes I've been subjected to. I think what scared me was that it was planned. (...) When it comes to this element of planning you know that... it sounds awful but there's a certain view of me as a woman and as a prostitute. They planned to rape me! They probably never would have done that to an ordinary girl, a colleague, a girl they had met at the bar, but it's okay to call and order someone to rape. In that sense I think it was the most brutal rape... I mean it was cold and calculated and well... There was no respect for me, I was not even a human being, I was a hole.

Even though Elena's narrative held many stories of sexual violence, this specific event was particularly painful for Elena to recount. She stated that it was one of the most brutal rapes she had been subjected to. Elena made sense of the rape as a result of her being positioned as 'prostitute'. As the sign of 'the prostitute' stuck to her body, it was transformed to an object of hate, an appropriate target for violence. She concluded that they, the men who raped her, *probably never would have done that to an ordinary girl*, as a 'prostitute' she was constituted as *not even a human being*, as an illegitimate life.

I understand the hostility and violence that threatened the bodies of the participants as a product of, what Ahmed theorizes as, an affective economy of hatred. In an affective economy of hatred, hate circulates in signs that are detached from particular bodies. What is at stake in hate crime is the sticking of a sign to the body of an individual, and the transformation of that body into an object of hate (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 55). The affective economy of hatred affected how the bodies of the participants moved in space, and shaped their prostitution practice. Even though far from all of the participants spoke of having been subjected to

violence, the risk of violence was, like Elena stated, something that always had to be *kept in mind* and something that the participants had to *work hard for not to happen*. The unpredictability of violence had a profound impact on how the participants organized and conducted their prostitution practice.

In this section I will explore the participants' narratives about violence and tactics to manage violence. In the first part of the section I will explore narratives about tactics, the clever tricks and covert practices of resistance the participants employed to manage the risk of violence. I will also explore how some women's social locations and personal biographies made them better equipped than others to manage violence. In the second part of the section I will explore narratives about experiences of the police, law courts and criminal justice system and how being reterritorialized as 'prostitute', for many of the participants, had entailed being reterritorialized as an 'undeserving victim', an illegitimate life.

### Tactics to manage the risk of violence

The participants spoke of a multitude of tactics to manage the risk of violence. While the participants expressed awareness of the impossibility of completely eliminating the risk of violence, they continuously engaged in practices of resistance. Tactics to manage the risk of violence were central to the participants' narratives about their 'everyday practices of resistance'. In what follows, I will explore the most frequently narrated tactics: 'tactics of screening clients', 'tactics of self representation', 'tactics of safety measures' and 'tactics in situations of domination'. I will also explore how some women's social locations and personal biographies made them better equipped than others to manage violence.

#### *Screening clients*

All the participants spoke of screening clients as an important tactic to manage the risk of violence. Most of the participants narrated how they carefully assessed which clients to accept and which to reject. Since the majority of the participants were involved in escort prostitution, they relied on email and/or phone conversation as their main sources of screening. The purpose of the screening tactics was essentially to avoid dangerous or unpleasant encounters. Maria spoke of her screening practice:

M – I never write my phone number in the ad, I've tried it once but my phone was ringing off the hook and there were many who were not serious. You always have to contact me through email first and if you seem to be nice and

serious you'll get my phone number and then I'll have a phone conversation as well before...

A – What happens during that call? Or how do you assess if someone is nice and serious through an email?

M – By how they spell, by how they express themselves, sometimes I get a feeling that someone has a negative attitude, that they look down on you, then it's out of the question.

Maria narrated how she analyzed the language and attitude of the client before deciding whether to agree on seeing him face-to-face. She spoke of how she was particularly observant to whether clients seemed to hold any negative attitudes or express any feelings of contempt towards her. Obviously it is a precarious endeavor to determine whether a person is safe to meet with or not merely based on an email conversation or a phone call. Many of the participants spoke of the importance of relying on their gut feeling or instincts in deciding which clients to accept and which to reject. Sonja spoke of intuition as central to her screening practice, this despite its obvious limitations:

A – You also talked about having good intuition, is that something you perceive as helpful in the initial contact with a client?

S – Yes it is, but there are no guarantees, often I say no over the phone when it doesn't feel right and I've also done it at times when I've just met someone and felt - This is not okay. Then I've, in a friendly manner, said - No thank you.

A – What kind of things would make you say no?

S – I don't know, it's mostly a feeling. It could also be that the man acted a little contemptuous...

Being able to read the clients' feelings emerged as central to the participants screening tactics. The participants screened for any feelings of hostility, contempt or hatred in the client. Except from relying on their gut feeling, the participants stated that if a client showed any sign of untrustworthiness, disrespectfulness or unwillingness to accept boundaries he was generally rejected. The participants who assessed clients over telephone generally did not accept calls from blocked numbers. Some of the participants also asked the client for personal information like home address or full name. Apart from relying on individual screening, the participants who screened clients via the internet also assessed clients' identities and reputation via escort forums and by talking to other escorts. There were also general rules of rejecting certain men. Many of the participants described

ethnicity as a factor that they considered when screening clients. Generally the participants were reluctant to see men who were not from the Nordic region. Nordic men were constructed as more likely to be trustworthy and less likely to hold degrading views on women involved in prostitution.

The women with experience of street prostitution also spoke of assessing clients based on their trustworthiness, respectfulness and willingness to accept the rules, however, the street space allows for face-to-face visual screening in which the woman also can assess the client's physical appearance and body language. Veronika spoke of her screening practice:

V – I've gotten real good at sensing people's moods and aggression and stuff like that. Sometimes I watch the guy who speaks to dogs [The reality TV-series *Dog whisperer with Cesar Milian*] and think to myself that I speak to men (laughs). I speak without using words. If I see a person I can tell... if I observe I can tell how that person is feeling, if he's aggressive or if he's kind or amicable, or worried or nervous, all that he with the dogs says. He says - That's a troubled face, and then I think to myself that I can tell by looking at the men what's a troubled face and what's aggression, just by looking at them...

A – Yes, is that something you've learnt in prostitution or is it something you've been able to do before as well?

V – Well, I'm raised with a mom who hit us a lot so I was used to assess what mood she was in and to stay away when I realized that she was about to hit. So I had had some training that was useful and then when you're in the street you get advantages from talking to them, I listen as much to what they don't say as to what they say. I have taken some risks, it's more luck than skill that I'm alive I guess I have to say, but at times it's skill too.

A – I'm sure!

Veronika's screening practices differed depending on if she was on the street or on the internet. On the street she could not only talk to but also visually assess the client. Veronika's ability to sense the mood of another person and to predict danger is in her narrative connected to her childhood experiences of physical abuse. Her personal biography made her sensitive to the threat of violence. Veronika employ that ability in her screening of clients, sensing which clients to reject and which to accept.

Whether the participants screened clients through email and telephone calls or on the street, they all spoke of the importance of being able to read the clients feelings, relying on their gut feeling and only seeing clients who seemed safe. While the street space allowed for immediate face-to-face encounters between women and clients, online spaces of prostitution required advertisement to attract clients. The participants who solicited for clients in online spaces of prostitution talked about the importance of representing themselves in a certain way to attract the good, non-violent clients.

*Tactics of self representation – ‘doing respectable feminine sexuality’, ‘doing class’*

In analyzing the participants’ stories about soliciting for clients in online space, tactics of self representation as a means to manage the risk of violence emerged. To avoid the gendered and classed sign, ‘the prostitute’, sticking to their bodies, some of the participants attempted to dis-identify with the ‘prostitute’ by ‘doing respectable feminine sexuality’ and ‘doing class’. As stated before, the sign, ‘the prostitute’, became sticky by its repetition in regulationist discourse, by its contact with other signs such as ‘the whore’ and ‘the working class woman’ and its association with ‘vulgarity, dirt and sexual immorality’.

In talking about her online self representation, Selma positioned herself against ideas of ‘the prostitute’ by doing ‘respectable feminine sexuality’. She spoke of how she first created an escort ad:

S – First I advertised on a couple of quite bad pages and then when I became a member on escorts.com I got some advice on where to advertise and how to write up the ad and stuff like that... Some people are just so fucking vulgar, you know – Come and fuck me... and I’m like eww... it just sounds disgusting. I wouldn’t like to see the men who go to see a person like that.

A – How do you think of it, your ad I mean?

S – I don’t want it to be tacky, I’m not a person who’s going to throw myself at them [the clients], acting like a porn star, crawling around in a little outfit, that’s not me...

A – No, so you want the ad to represent who you are?

S – Yes, well only fine gentlemen are allowed to see me.

A – Mm... and how do you express... do you express it that way?

S – Yes, well now I’ve changed my ad, I mean I never wrote anything vulgar but I’ve changed it a bit so that it sounds a bit more like I’m a good girl.

‘The bad girl’ is constituted in relation to ‘the good girl’. Selma was consciously presenting herself as ‘a good girl’ in her ad as well as in her narrative, positioning herself against what she considered *vulgar* and *tacky*. She constituted herself as somebody who would not ‘throw herself at men, act like a porn star or crawl around in little outfits’. In her self representation, in her ad as well as in her narrative, she was contesting those meanings (vulgar and tacky) being ascribed to her body.

Ahmed asks the question of how we might understand that some signs of hate are repeated. She answers by stating that it is because they are the effects of ‘histories that have stayed open’ (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 59). The sign ‘the prostitute’ is indeed an effect of a history that has stayed open. ‘The whore-prostitute’ still operates as a facilitator of patriarchy and is a central figure in the governing of female sexuality. Doing ‘respectable feminine sexuality’ as a tactic to avoid being constituted as a ‘prostitute’ was a recurring theme in the narratives of the participants. Doing ‘respectable feminine sexuality’ could be made sense of as a practice of resistance, by resisting certain meanings being ascribed to their bodies the participants attempted to avoid the transformation of their bodies into objects of hate and thereby appropriate targets for violence. While the connection between representations of ‘respectable feminine sexuality’ and managing the risk of violence was implicit in Selma’s narrative, Alicia explicitly made that connection:

I think that I already from the beginning decided that I wanted to be some sort of high class escort. I knew which type of men I wanted to attract. So, right from the start I talked about me loving the opulent and luxurious and I charged quite a lot. I think you get rid of the worst guys in that way. I never wrote anything like – Damn I’m horny come and fuck me in the ass, it would never even occur to me to do something like that. I never even mentioned the word anal sex on my site. I’ve written that I can offer certain special services but I don’t write what kind of services, the regulars know what it means when you write special services. You don’t have to be so graphic all the time either. I’ve never showed any pictures in which I expose myself, I think I might have shown a nipple once. So it’s those types of men... I mean I attract the type of men who think it’s exciting not to see it all, the kind of men who appreciate to be a gentleman and who like to seduce. While I’ve met one girl and she really... well she flaunts all she’s got and she posts all these Manga BDSM-pics. If you do that you have to be aware of that there is a quite big group of men who

already have bad attitudes towards women who sell sex, who think that such women deserve to be humiliated. Those men exist and then I think it's even more important to make it clear that I don't like that kind of thing.

Alicia made sense of her tactic of self-representation as a tactic to attract the 'right' men and thereby avoid violence. As a woman involved in prostitution Alicia could not control the meanings that were ascribed to her body, but by doing 'respectable feminine sexuality' she attempted to avoid 'the prostitute' sticking to her body transforming it to an object of hate. Both in Selma's and Alicia's narrative there is a clear connection between 'respectable feminine sexuality' and class. 'Doing respectable feminine sexuality' is inextricable from 'doing class', as 'respectable feminine sexuality' is a configuration of gender and class norms. 'Doing class' as a tactic of self-representation was another recurring theme in the narratives. As stated before the sign 'the prostitute' became sticky through its repetition in regulationist discourse and through its contact with other signs such as 'the working class woman'. Mid nineteenth century classism and sexism led to the equating of 'the prostitute' with 'the working class woman'. 'The prostitute' was constituted as a bawdy, rowdy and overly sexual character drawing on stereotypical ideas about the working class. The participants whose tactics of self-representation involved 'doing class' positioned themselves against 'the prostitute' as 'low class' woman in an attempt to avoid dangerous encounters. Jenna's narrative was an example of that.

When Jenna and I met for our first interview, she spoke of how the client with whom she had met the night before had overstepped her boundaries and violated their agreement. When concernedly I asked her how she was doing she told me, considering the circumstances, she was doing okay. She said she knew how to manage when encounters with clients turned violent, and that it rarely happened anymore, as opposed to in the beginning of her prostitution experience.

J – In the beginning I had to take a lot of shit before I got into it, the new stuff, how to market yourself, how to act, how to write, and how to look to attract the good men. So... they were very mean to me the first six months, I had to take a lot of shit, I was totally pushed around...

A – Who was mean to you?

J – All the clients basically, there weren't many who were nice and I thought it was all horrible – What the fuck am I supposed to do? But then little by little I started learning the tricks and I started changing clientele.

Jenna made sense of the violence she was subjected to in the beginning of her prostitution experience as connected to the way she represented herself. She stated that she did not know how to market herself to *attract the good men*, something she had learnt with time. Jenna spoke of what she believed it was about her earlier ads that attracted violent and disrespectful clients.

A – So eh... in the beginning before you realized how to best market yourself to get the right clients, in retrospect, when you look back, what do you think you did ‘wrong’ [showing citation marks]?

J – Well first of all I had black hair... I mean rich men want blonds... Eh... and then I wrote - You can absolutely not pull my hair and then they think – I’m going to bring her here just to pull her hair, you know the sick ones...

A – Yeah...

J – So yes they were really dodgy, you know the kind of guys who don’t want to let you go home afterwards... But I don’t know... I had really bad pictures I don’t know if that might have mattered.

A – What do you mean by bad pictures?

J – Well you know really poor quality pictures, you know when you put up a camera so that you only see a little bit of the body at a time.

A – Yeah, okay... What’s the difference today then, how do you market yourself today?

J – Well then I guess when these rich guys saw it they thought that’s nothing, that’s a low class girl, I want higher class. I’m thinking no good pictures, lives in Råsten, that’s basically the ghetto, and black hair, no!

A – And today you’re thinking about marketing yourself differently?

J – Yes today I have a high class site, you know it’s red and it looks really professional and I write - I’m a really happy girl who wants to share my joy and energy. I’m looking for you who are ordinary and normal, a regular guy, and then they’re like – Oh, I’m a regular guy!

A – So how did you cope during that difficult time?

J – Well I was very depressed and whiny, bitter, unfriendly and sarcastic, I didn’t have a good reputation...

A – That’s understandable...

J – Yes...

A – I mean it’s not strange that you were sad, bitter and sarcastic when you were treated badly.

J – No it really wasn’t but then I was like – Lets go blond! And since then I have gotten more and more classy and you know... You check other girls’ ads,

the ones who are a little higher end and then you think, I can do even better, I can express myself better than I have before, I can take an even better picture...

The extracts from Jenna's narrative are illustrative of how she employed tactics of 'doing class' in order to avoid her body being transformed into an object of hate, and an appropriate target for violence. By representing herself as 'classy', she positioned herself against ideas about 'the prostitute' as *cheap* and *low class*. The prostitution market is highly hierarchal. As discussed in Chapter Eight, while all women involved in prostitution struggle with the social stigma attached to prostitution, not all are equally burdened by the whore stigma. By 'doing class' Jenna attempted to avoid the whore stigma:

I have learnt that there are different types of escorts, there are – hoes, escorts and courtesans, if you put it that way. The hoes... that's what I was in the beginning, a hoe have to take a lot of shit, you don't want to do it, you're bitter and whiny and you hate everything, you hate men. Then you rise in class and then you think - Talk about having power...

Rising in class, 'doing class', transformed Jenna from 'a hoe' to 'an escort' entailing less exposure for violence. By rejecting *low class* characteristics expressed in the production of 'the prostitute' as 'the hoe' elsewhere in culture, Jenna attempted to avoid being ascribed meaning as 'low, crude and dirty' and thereby avoid the sign, 'the prostitute', sticking to her body. Her narrative also reveals how 'doing class' entailed representing herself as someone who willfully engaged in prostitution as opposed to someone who *don't want to do it*, as someone *happy* rather than someone *bitter and whiny*.

### *Safety measures*

Even though most of the participants employed numerous tactics to screen clients as well as tactics of self-representation, the risk of being subjected to violence prevailed. The participants further resisted violence by taking a number of different safety measures. Sonja who mostly saw clients in her own home talked about the precautions she took in order to avoid being subjected to violence:

S – First of all, I don't know if you noticed but there is an alarm just inside the door. I hung it there in the chain and if you pull it then it gives off a one hundred and thirty decibel sound, if you, on top of that, throw it out in the hallway the chances are great that they will concentrate on that. But I always

check that it's the right person and that it's not more than one person, if you booked one, and stuff like that. Then I, like most others, have a silent cellphone in the bathroom since that normally is the only lockable space you have. I also have self-defense sprays in several places in the apartment.

A – Are those things you've figured out yourself or have you been advised via the forum?

S – You can get advice there. I know a man who works with personal security and these self-defense sprays are legal but they have the same effect as tear gas sprays... I haven't tested them but outdoors they are supposed to floor four men at a four meter distance.

A – Wow.

S – Yes, but like I said I haven't had to test them... but they are there as security...

The unpredictability of violence had the participants take great precautions in order to prevent getting hurt. Despite the extra phone in the bathroom, the alarm and self-defense sprays Sonja stated that she was aware that there was still a risk she would be attacked, as an additional safety measure she often arranged to call a friend to confirm that she was alright after seeing a client:

S – You can't get away from it, that something could happen! The only way to avoid it is to have someone there in the room with you and that's not possible. But you can have a call afterwards to check that everything is okay. Then you have to have agreed on what to do if things are not okay as well. Because just to know that things don't seem to be okay and not being able to get to the girl, that's not to any help. It's about safety!

A – And that's something you... Your friends or colleagues, do you always help each other in that way?

S – It's really only if it's a regular you might... On the other hand I know of girls who have gotten into trouble with regulars as well... Anyone can lose it and that's what makes it unsafe, but like I said generally the men are nice.

Even though most encounters with clients proceed without any violence the unpredictability of violence caused the participants great anxiety and influenced how their bodies moved in space, and how they organized their prostitution practice. Depending on the setting, the safety measures taken were slightly different. Maria who both saw clients at hotels and in their homes spoke of the different precautions she took depending on the setting:

If it's at someone's place then I only see them if they are written on that address. If worst come to worst then that's their address. I often take my car there and park at a distance from the house so that they can't spot me, so that they can't see my license number and track me. If it's the first time I like to carry an alarm. And I want someone to know where I am and when I'm expected to come back. You're a little cautious when you walk in, you might check the room; are there any cameras? Is there anyone else in the room or are we alone? And then you screen the person, does he seem alright, but it's difficult because if someone is nervous you might interpret that as if something is wrong. But often it's just nerves. The first time you might want to keep your clothes close to the exit so that you can run out and you also think about how the lock works by the exit. If it's at a hotel it's about the same thing. You might call and check that the person really is there so that you're not tricked to go there, that has happened before. Otherwise it's basically the same procedure. You park the car at a distance and you carry an alarm of course. I usually have a cell phone as well. Some say that's not good, what I never take with me is driver's license or any other personal id. If someone would look through my bag I don't want them to say – Aha, here's her driver's license. I take a little money, not a lot, just money so that I will be able to get away from there. When I get to the hotel I usually check the wardrobe pretending that I want to hang my coat, or look into the bathroom and say – Awh that's nicely decorated just to check that no one is there. You've got to be a little street smart.

The safety measures that Sonja and Maria spoke of were common among the participants, however not all participants were as diligent in applying them. Lisa for example stated that she was more careful in the beginning but with time she stopped taking precautions and only relied on her gut feeling:

In the beginning I was thinking about it a lot, in the beginning I only went to people's places and to hotels and then I was really careful to you know put an extra phone in the bathroom if something would happen and the same thing when they came to my place, at first I gave them the wrong address and when I could see that they were there I gave them the right address so that they could use the intercom and come upstairs, but after a while it was less stressful because I learnt that your gut feeling is really what's most important, if you have a good gut feeling nothing will happen. So I stopped putting a phone in the bathroom I just kept my bag near so that I could snatch it and run to the bathroom if I would need to.

Lacking the ability to eliminate the risk of violence, the participants had to adapt to operating in a space in which they were constantly at risk of being constituted as ‘appropriate targets for violence’. The participants’ narratives reveal how they employed multiple tactics to manage the risk of violence, these clever tricks and covert practices were a central part of their everyday practices of resistance.

*Tactics depending on social location/personal biography*

Just as with emotion management tactics the participants’ narratives suggest that they were more or less equipped to create effective tactics to manage the risk of violence.

While most of the participants struggled to prevent risk some were prone to taking risks.

Johanna and I got in touch through a self-help organization for women with prostitution experience. Johanna is in her mid-twenties and comes from a middle class background. After exiting prostitution she had went back to school and completed an university degree. When we met, Johanna was the mother of two living a quiet life in a sleepy small town. Johanna was raped when she was fourteen years old and entered into prostitution shortly after. In her narrative Johanna made sense of her involvement in prostitution as a form of self-harm, she spoke of how prostitution enabled her to cope with the intense feelings of anxiety and self-loathing that overwhelmed her after the rape. To Johanna, neither money nor safety mattered, prostitution was a means to temporary relief from emotional distress.

J – In the beginning I always made sure that I got paid but after a while it was like – Whatever! Sometimes I got money, other times I got booze and pills...

A – Do you remember how you used to make sense of it then? In one way there’s an obvious logic, when you meet with someone for the money. When the money didn’t matter anymore how did you make sense of it?

J – Validation I think... I felt a little better in the moment, but after it was chaos...

A – Can you describe what you used to feel like before and what you used to feel like after?

J – Before I always felt very anxious, that’s why I contacted them to get relief and then after it felt a little better for a short while but then it got even worse...

(...)

A – Now in retrospect, how do you think of it?

J – Now I'm mostly happy for surviving, it could have ended real bad, it really could!

A – Yes, and I understand you saw it as a form of self-harm.

J – Yes.

A – Then I guess there was a point in *not* trying to protect yourself as well?

J – Yes, pretty much, I felt like whatever happens happens. I didn't deserve better anyway! And then after a while I guess I felt like it would have been for the best if they would have killed me, then I would have been free.

Johanna's reason for entering into prostitution turned her prostitution practice into a very risky one, leaving her extremely vulnerable to violence. As prostitution functioned as a form of self-harm, Johanna did not attempt to avoid risk but rather to seek it out. While Johanna was the only participant who made sense of her involvement in prostitution as self-harm, some of the other participants spoke of prostitution as at times taking on a self-destructive meaning.

Maria spoke of having periods when her prostitution practice turned into an expression of self-destructivity, during these periods she was prone to emotional as well physical risk taking.

M – It can be destructive to sell sex. It has been destructive to me as well at times, but it has also been the opposite, I mean not at all, I mean something that I've wanted and it has been good sex. (...)

A – How come you think your experiences have been so different in different situations?

M – It's partially about who you see and how it feels and how you're treated and then... I have... I have been very self destructive and sometimes I feel like I do this to be a little... I'm not particularly nice to myself.

A – Mm.

M – No, I'm not particularly nice to myself when I see two clients right after each other, that doesn't always feel good, and then it feels like I do it to... then it's a little destructive. I think I at the most have seen three clients in a row and there is no pleasure in it, it rather becomes painful and that's not good.

A – No.

M – Or you let yourself be manipulated or talked into doing things you don't really want. But I wouldn't say that this is just when I'm selling sex this could happen in private relationships as well.

When prostitution became an expression of self-destructivity, managing risk ceased to matter. Participants whose personal biographies had left them struggling with their sense of self-worth and self-destructive tendencies were less able to manage risk in prostitution. Apart from personal biography, the social location of the participants also served as a factor in how effective the participants were in managing the risk of violence.

Sonja, who was a senior member on the sexwork.net forum, spoke of how she perceived the risk of violence as unequally distributed depending on the age and experience of the person. Apart from managing the risk of violence in her own prostitution practice, Sonja attempted to help others, particularly young women who were new to prostitution. Despite the fact that she would soon be in a position that would allow her to retire she found it difficult to exit the world she entered into eight years ago:

A – In the last interview you said that when you’ve seen this world, no matter what you think of it, it’s hard to just exit, to leave...

S – Mm... it’s because often you get to see a different world than what you’ve seen before and even if you start working, what you would call, an ordinary job or exit this world completely, you still know that this world exists. I guess since you’ve peaked under the lid you know what’s there, even if you put the lid back on, so to speak, it’s still there.

A – Right and how would you describe what’s there, I mean when you peak under that lid what’s there...

S – All kinds of bugs, really disgusting bugs. (laughs)

A – (laughs)

S – No, but it’s a... how can I put it, a much tougher and violent world where there’s a lot of abuse and cruelty and things that... I’m not going to say that you can’t understand, but you don’t want to. (...) I think if I would have lived in another time or in another place, I would have been a Madame or something like that...

A – ...mm, how come?

S – ...and no girls would have had it better (laughs). Because it’s a dangerous world and the girls working in it need a lot of support and help not to get into trouble. Then of course you could wish for a world where there were no escorts at all but there has always been and I believe there will always be, no matter what people think about it...

Sonja was not a Madame but was very active on one of the forums and had become a person who many women turned to for advice and guidance.

The girls often contact me when something has happened, it could be that they have been violated but they're not sure whether the man has done it on purpose, so to speak, or if they're overreacting... So far that has never happened, I can say that much! (laughs) (...) It's mostly young girls who are violated I believe, girls who have a hard time saying no and who have little experience. I talk to a lot of young girls and I always try to encourage them and tell them - Act like your tough until you get tough. That's what it's about, you have to be strict, otherwise you will get into trouble sooner or later. (...) There's one of the girls that I'm taking care of a little extra now and I will probably have to do so for a couple of more months, then I think she will be okay, but otherwise it's mostly talking via mail and telephone and stuff like that. The thing is that there's a community and that gives strength. I have told them that it's about Girl Power, together we are strong but on our own we could easily become victims. Now as soon as someone complains a little I just write - Girl Power, it's nothing! And then they toughen up (laughs). But really it's not that different from what I used to preach to my daughters once upon a time, it's the same thing, it's basically about not letting anybody step on you.

Sonja's social location, her senior position at the forum and her experience allowed her to support younger women who were less adept to manage risk and more likely to be subjected to violence. Age was not the only factor that made one's social location risky. Betty's social location as a drug addict on the street entailed little chance for her to protect herself from physical risk.

A – And safety wise how was it? Did you experience that you had control in situations like that or that you were able to protect yourself from threats or violence?

B – No, then I was... it's really open. I can say that I had a lot of fucking luck. I only had small incidents of people tricking me or somebody being a little over the top but nobody ever hit me, rather the other way around, they wanted me to hit them, or pee on them or things like that...

A – Right...

B – I've never been raped, well maybe in the sense that the person has been like – I don't have any money. But then I've submitted, then they'll get it, so – No, I don't have any money and then I've submitted instead of resisting or making things worse... What was the question?

A – If you experienced that you could protect yourself against threats and violence?

B – No, I was very vulnerable...

A – And when it comes to condoms and stuff like that, it was both with and without?

B – Yes, I did do it without, I tried to be a little persistent and say – What about the condom? But then they would be like – Well then I'll only give you three hundred, and then I gave in, to get that extra money...

Betty's vulnerable position as drug addicted and her need for money to buy drugs entailed that she took more risks and was less able to protect herself against physical risk. Betty's narrative also touches on how violence or coercion was normalized by some of the participants. Betty did not speak of the instances when she was coerced to have sex without getting paid as rape. She spoke of submitting instead of resisting in order to "*not make things worse*". The participants who were most vulnerable to violence were the ones who were not able to control the conditions under which they engaged in prostitution and the ones who for different reasons, related to their social location and personal biography, had difficulties with maintaining and setting boundaries with clients. The involvement in prostitution of some of these participants is best described as a state of domination.

#### *Resistance in states of domination*

Even though options are more limited in states of domination, resistance is still possible (McLaren, 2002, p. 221). Participants who found themselves in states of domination nevertheless spoke of tactics to resist violence. Some of the participants narrated about psychological tactics they employed to prevent a potentially dangerous situation getting out of hand. Jenna, who is one of the participants who had experienced most violence from clients spoke of her tactics in situations of domination:

A – Has it ever happened that you've been so badly treated, beaten or hurt that you've thought of reporting it?

J – No, it has never happened... I think I act in a way that doesn't provoke them... so that after all they think to themselves - Maybe she doesn't want to do this. This foreigner yesterday he had a really big dick and he wanted to fuck my ass and I told him – I don't think I can get it in. I do anal, it says in my ad, and he was nagging but I said – No, it won't work, and after a while he

stopped, but you have to say it in a nice way – No, you’re so big, I don’t think it will work (alters her voice to make it softer and sweeter).

A – In situations like that... I understand that you’ve found a way to handle them to regain some control...

J – Yes, you almost have to be even nicer... If I would say – No I won’t do that (with a strong determined voice) they will be like – Yes, you will, I’ve paid, you’re mine! You have to be more like – No, I don’t think that I can do it (soft voice). (...) It’s hard to be impolite to someone who looks really happy. That smile is alpha and omega if you can’t pull that off then I don’t think that you should work with this... then they won’t come back and then you will be subjected to a lot of crap I think. But they can ask nicely like – Can I come in your mouth too and then you say – No, I don’t dare to. You know you have to act like a little sissy... and then – Can’t you come on my breasts instead and – Yes, I can. (...) You learn how to deal with men really, I’m professional when it comes to men.

The clever tricks and covert practices of resistance Jenna employed to make out in prostitution had her conclude that she was a “*professional when it comes to men*”. Being unable to shape the space she operated within, she adapted to it. In situations when clients attempted to break the contract Jenna spoke of acting friendly and submissive as a tactic to prevent further hostility and aggression. Therese spoke of similar tactics:

A – How did you avoid being subjected to violence?

T – To play along and not trigger whatever seemed to trigger them, that you get angry, sad or cry then they just get even more excited. You scold them like they were little boys, like – Don’t you think you’re being a little too rough now, hi, hi, hi. – Am I grabbing you too hard? – A little, you know I’m just a little girl (with a soft voice) (sighs and shakes her head) All these tricks... you can’t say with your regular voice – Ouch, ouch, ouch! – You like this don’t you? Slap, slap, you know. It’s like acting, oh god it’s a little... to talk about yourself in this way... (laughs).

A – But it’s a role you play isn’t it?

T – Yes, it’s really a role. (...) But so you learn what triggers them in a dangerous way, you have to stay away from that because if you don’t you will end up being raped, because there is a difference.

A – Right. Did you ever get raped?

T – Yes... not without getting paid... but in the end everything had escalated

and I agreed to do a lot more than what I wanted to, or what I had set a boundary for... And then all of a sudden it was way too much for it to qualify as paid sex. When I get so little for it, or when the person comes and it's so violent that I don't have a chance to be one step ahead and shut down to get it over with but get thrown down and taken, but this was in the end when everything was falling apart. Then it felt like rape.

A – I understand.

T – And even when I had to physically fight him off, the guy who didn't want to wear a condom, and I was holding him from me with my feet and saying – If you put that thing in me I will kick you in your balls (giggling) you always had to add that giggle. – But why is it such a problem I don't have any diseases. – But what if I do? I can't infect you that would be really mean. Always this childish behavior to appear harmless, but in short, yes I've felt raped.

Therese also spoke of being in an extremely vulnerable position and still exercising some sort of resistance. By the end of her involvement in prostitution Therese was unable to take the precautions she had before. However, it was not only the more vulnerable participants who experienced situations of domination. While both Therese and Jenna described longer periods of their involvement in prostitution as more or less characterized by a state of domination, other participants described certain encounters as characterized by domination. Rebecca told a story of such an encounter:

Back home there was one guy, well he wasn't from back home, he was travelling, he wrote really nice emails, we had really nice phone conversations and then when he came he was like one hundred and sixty, one hundred and eighty kilos or something like that and totally... What can I say, he didn't get it, he didn't get how strong he was, he didn't get how heavy he was, he didn't get any of that and he grabbed me real hard and then I thought, I don't have a chance on him, I really don't have a chance on him. I told him all the time - That hurts. He was like – What? Oh! And then the next second he grabbed me just as hard. It was like talking to someone who is slightly mentally retarded and he wasn't, but it's something with being horny, it brings out the weirdest sides in some people. Really, they can be completely normal and then, when you get started, they start sounding weird and some just start shaking. They start doing weird things or saying weird things and I'm like – Okay? Some get really intense. But back to this guy, because he was also one of these guys that can come as much and as often you like and he had paid for an hour, after half an hour he came

and I thought okay good, it's over, but no... I had told him all along that – That hurts, that hurts, that hurts... so when I blew him, I blew him with my teeth and he said – Ouch, that hurts! (laughs) No self-insight!

Even though in a state of domination, being hurt and dominated by a client, Rebecca narrated how she exercised resistance by attempting to hurt him back. Rebecca's story which is a story about a violating encounter also becomes a story of her wit and boldness, a story in which she makes fun of and outsmarts the client.

Despite all the tactics the women employed in order to manage the risk of violence, many of them still had experiences of threats of violence or violence. In what follows I will explore the experiences that the idea of 'the prostitute' as an undeserving victim produced in the participants lives.

#### 'The prostitute' as an undeserving victim

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the participants' narratives spoke of how when the prostitute sign sticks to a woman's body, she is transformed to an illegitimate life and placed outside the expectations of public protection. She is thereby excluded from being recognized as sexually victimized as she is constituted as the Other "*the woman for whom the act of abusive, violating, dehumanizing sex is meant*" (Barry, 1995, p. 84). Research indicates that women involved in prostitution often are not assisted by the police when they fall victim of violent crime as well as rarely report crime that they have been subjected to (Sanders, 2005a, p. 89). In the second part of the section, I will explore the participants' narratives about experiences with the police, law courts and the judicial system in reporting violent crimes.

The idea of 'the prostitute' as undeserving victim is sometimes internalized by women involved in prostitution. Sonja spoke of a poll on an escort forum in which the respondents were asked about experiences of violence or threats of violence. She said she was shocked by the results, very few of the respondents stated that they had not been subjected to any type of violence or threats of violence. However, most of the women blamed themselves for the violence they had been subjected to:

The women have often felt that something wasn't right and yet they did it for different reasons, and then they feel stupid because they should have known

better. But at the same time, that you make a poor judgement call doesn't mean that somebody has the right to abuse you. But I believe that women who are involved in prostitution to a larger degree than other women place the blame on themselves in general.

Some of the participants had internalized ideas about not being worthy of protection or having themselves to blame for the abuse and violence they had been subjected to.

Lydia tells a story of self-blame. As you might remember Lydia was subjected to violence by a client recently after she had started to sell sex on the streets of Oslo. She spoke of what happened:

L – Then I got in trouble... I got in trouble on the street. I met a person who treated me badly. When you have some years in prostitution, then it's a different thing, then you can smell danger from afar, you see it, you sense it. You go with your gut feeling that something is wrong. But when you're naïve, when you're not used to it, like I wasn't, then you don't see it. I couldn't feel it, that it wasn't okay, that that person wasn't okay. After eight, nine months on the street I had my own apartment and I brought him there and then he... or I don't know if it was me who was paranoid and scared, I think it was, I really blame myself somehow.

A – You do?

L – Yes, because maybe he wasn't that bad but I just got it in my head that this person wants to hurt me, he wants to kill me, he wants to hurt me. I just had that feeling... and then he was acting funny and I thought to myself – No, no I have to defend myself and he was talking to me and calling me names and he said – You foreign girls, all of you are whores, bla, bla, bla, you know.

A – Mm.

L – And he looked at me in a strange way and I thought that there is something strange happening, it's either him or me. I have to do something. But since he was already there I thought to myself - I try to do it, maybe it's just something I've made up. But as soon as I took off my clothes he slapped me, he slapped me hard and he said – Do you really think I will pay you, you fucking whore! You're worth nothing! You're worth nothing! You won't get my money! And when I was slapped I thought he would slap me again, that he would abuse me or kill me...

A – Right.

L – So I had this little table that was smaller than this [gestures towards the coffee table] and I had a bottle of coke, a glass bottle and I took this coke bottle and I hit him in his head, but he didn't pass out instead he got real pissed and he wiped... there was a little cut here [points to her forehead] and there was a little blood and when he saw that he took a sweater that was on the floor and walked up behind me and tried to suffocate me and since he came at me from behind I couldn't defend myself.

Lydia continued to narrate how she was abused by the client, she eventually escaped the apartment by jumping out of the window. Later on in the interview she returned to the violent event.

L – I have learnt a lot of things about prostitution. You should never let people know that you're scared. I mean people are just like animals, just like dogs. If you show a dog you're scared he can smell it. Then [since she has learned these things] things have gotten better. But I'm trying to get away from prostitution now and I think that this year will probably be my last year. I don't see that many clients, I only have two or three who call me and even them... I will probably say to them that there will be no more. It's just this summer and then I might move back to Norway. I feel better now and then I can live a life in Norway, like an ordinary person, a completely ordinary person, and live a normal life you know. But in prostitution you don't only meet assholes, there are many good men who are kind and that person he was the only person during all my time at the street who was mean to me, who did anything to me, all the men I've met since then have not... I'm not a person who does drugs, I don't drink alcohol, I live a healthy life.

A - Right

L – I know how to talk to people and they can tell right away that I'm no addict or alcoholic, they realize as soon as they talk to me and that's positive from my side and from their side.

A – Right.

L – The thing that happened to me I mostly see it as my fault, I was too fast you know. If I would have given myself some time to think it through I wouldn't have done it and then he might have went and left me there and then it wouldn't have happened...

A – Yes, but at the same time there was no wonder that you got scared, he didn't have any right to hit you.

L – No, and he had me in a stranglehold. You know it made me sick. I was

devastated. I had this feeling that I was dead, that I was no longer here... there were several months before I came back (laughs).

A – It's horrible.

L – I think I was hovering somewhere dead and then I came down again...

Even though Lydia was subjected to a violent crime she still blamed herself for what had happened to her. Lydia's story speaks of how the idea of 'the prostitute' as an undeserving victim makes connections with personal experience and narrative. It is quite clear from Lydia's story that she most likely would not have been able to avoid violence by acting differently, her body had already been transformed to an object of hate by the client. Lydia's story also speaks of what happens to the bodies that are encountered as objects of hate. Lydia narrated how she had a feeling of being 'dead', of how she 'hovered somewhere dead' and it took months before she 'came down again'. Ahmed (2004a, p. 58) writes about the negative effects of hate messages, bodies that are transformed into objects of hate experience both physiological symptoms and emotional distress. The participants who had been subjected to violence spoke of physical and emotional effects ranging from fear and anxiety to nightmares, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide attempts. For some of them, the hated body became an object of hate to themselves as well, these participants often struggled with feelings of self-loathing and self-destructivity.

Even though many of the participants spoke of blaming themselves for being subjected to violence, some also spoke of reporting violations and abuse to the police. Maria's narrative entailed two experiences of reporting crime to the police. As a safety measure, Maria had an agreement with a male acquaintance, the agreement was that she would text him after seeing a client. If the guy did not hear from her he was supposed to call the police. Maria told a story of what happened when she had texted her acquaintance but for some reason the text message was not delivered:

M – I met this wine trader and we did what we were supposed to do and then he asked me if I wanted to come with him for a wine tasting and I did. So we're sitting there trying different wines and the text message had not be delivered so he (the acquaintance) calls the cops, this is a little interesting in itself because he says – In this particular hotel, in this particular room, is this person, this is the deal, and they say – Well, there's nothing we can do about it. Wait for twenty-four hours and then you can make a missing person charge.

A – Seriously?

M – Yes, and he [the acquaintance] says:

– No you have to at least go there and check if... something might have happened. She was supposed to contact me and she hasn't!

– Yes but we can't spend any time on stuff like that.

So now I know if something happens, don't call the cops, there are other ways.

A – I guess that's the morale of the story.

M – Yes, that's how important they consider it to be ...

Skepticism towards the police is clearly not unfounded, many of the participants had experienced discrimination, not only by the police but also the law courts and the judicial system. Maria told another story:

M – In the beginning, I made the mistake to start seeing a client on a private basis, it wasn't good. It turned out he was the worst type of psychopath. He was really jealous and it ended with him trying to strangle me and I chose to report him. First they did the whole Rape Kit at the hospital and then I reported it to the police. The first question they asked me was - How did you meet him? I gave them an honest answer. The second question was - Well, isn't it that you're in to strangle-sex?

A – What?

M – So that made me feel even more like you can't trust authorities, authorities don't care about you.

A – That's horrible!

M – Yes, and the whole trial was based on that I actually was a prostitute. He was... he had a Post-doc position so... - You take a lot of risks don't you? Well you know the whole trial was like that. So I don't trust the judicial system or the police. If I would get in trouble I would call a friend who has helped girls to get out before. He runs a restaurant but he used to be a Hells Angels hang around and walks around with guns and wears a bullet proof vest.

A – What do you mean by 'to get out'?

M – He has helped... there was a girl who was locked in a bathroom all naked, she climbed out the window naked and then he rang the doorbell and said – Client, we want her clothes and her handbag and you better not do this again. But to call the police – No but we can't come! If something happens again I won't go to the police. I won't report it.

Both Maria's stories speak of how she, as a 'prostitute', was placed outside of the protection of the law. In the rape trial the perpetrator was not convicted despite the evidence. Maria was made responsible for being violated, as a 'prostitute' she

was constructed as an ‘undeserving victim’. Maria drew the conclusion that as a ‘prostitute’ she cannot expect to be protected by the law, she has to look outside of the law for protection.

Maria was not the only participant who had experiences of being miscredited as ‘prostitute’ when reporting a crime. Elena had a similar experience. Elena’s early teens were very turbulent. After she had been pimped by her cousin she met an older man who served as her pimp. The man, Göran, mostly sold her to a friend of him. At one point, he and his friend tied her up in a bed and raped her, she reported the crime to the police. Sometime before the rape took place Elena had went to visit a young man she knew in Stockholm. Elena was romantically interested in the man and had hopes that he was interested in her too. Soon after she arrived in Stockholm he raped her. Later on it turned out that he had raped several girls. As an investigation was instigated, Elena became a plaintiff in that case as well. The two different court cases took place around the same time. Elena spoke of how the prosecutor in the Stockholm case feared that her status as deserving victim would be threatened if the court would find out about her involvement in prostitution.

E – Up there [in Stockholm] it was so important to keep the two court cases apart because – What if they found out what the first case was about, or I mean the second... Then the verdict might be different in Stockholm. And I was like – Isn’t a rape a rape? If he rapes me in Stockholm how is that affected by them selling me back home?

A – No.

E – So once again the ignorance, and that’s the problem with being a prostitute, that you’re both a victim and a perpetrator in the eyes of many. There is no coherent image. I saw a documentary recently about a woman who was called a con artist or something like that, or she wasn’t called that but that was basically the message. She had been a prostitute and she had been with many, many men. It had started when she was working as a maid for some rich family and the man in the house had sexually abused her. Then she became the seductress and she swindled thousands of Swedish men of their money. And I was like – swindled? Either she’s a prostitute or she was swindling? Or did they leave after seeing her and were like – Oh my god, I paid! (laughs)

A – (laughs)

E – No but seriously. How does that work? Then it’s so obvious, that you’re both victim and perpetrator, and really more of a perpetrator. (...) But anyway, in Stockholm I was treated pretty decently even if I was told - Don’t say anything!

I was still the victim and it was pretty clear. Somehow they wanted what was best for me. The court case back home, not so much. It was horrible, it was a horrible trial. If I see that judge again I don't know what I'll do. God, it was so contemptuous, and I do feel sorry for myself so please bear with me a little... I described things that were really hard for me, especially the last assault in the bed, and I described acts that were clearly violations and then there's this ignorance – Why did you go with him? You know all of that. The focus was on... and again karma! Göran [the pimp] had got paid by Sven [the client] for what they did to me and so Göran billed Sven's company and so the charge was breach of trust with fraudulent intent. That was the focus of the trial, and maybe I exaggerate in retrospect because I was pretty traumatized when this happened but it was still like – How could you do that to the company? Aren't you ashamed? But that the investigation states how they tied me to a bed, that wasn't important. Maybe I sound very bitter and hateful but I won't forgive that.

A – No, how do you forgive something like that, or why should you?

E – No, I won't and I'm so fucking angry today. Then I was in a situation I couldn't do anything about. When I left I felt how contemptuous everything was to me. There I was not a victim. In that court case I was rather an accessory to breach of trust with fraudulent intent, if not the main suspect! They brought up things like - She has misled him with her age and she has misled... They claimed I had said I was older than I was, which is possible. But then I know that I told him that I was fifteen because I remember him saying that he didn't believe me. We were discussing my age and that was before... fuck it... I don't have to explain myself!

A – No, you don't!

E – Right, but then I was the perpetrator. It was so clear, I led Göran astray. He was a family father, he would never had done anything like that if he hadn't met me. He got six months and then I think he served two. (...) The local newspaper reported from the trial so it was... even if the media coverage wasn't that big it was all very hard for me. At the same time I was struggling to come to terms with myself, who was I? Was I the victim or the perpetrator? Had I really been equally involved in what me and Göran [the pimp] had? It was really hard because I really didn't feel that way and I think I never felt that way, even after... But a lot of these negative thoughts came because of the trial and what happened there, of course other things had happened before too... It may sound like I've never thought of myself as anything but a victim but of course there's been times when I thought of myself as a perpetrator and of course you can take it to the extreme and say that if I didn't exist none of this would ever have happened.

As I stated initially, in an affective economy of hatred hate circulates in signs that are detached from particular bodies. Elena's narrative illustrates how when the prostitute sign sticks to a body, that body is transformed into an undeserving victim. Elena was the victim of two rapes. First she was raped by a young man she knew, a man who turned out being reported for raping several girls, then she was raped by her pimp and a client. In the first rape trial, Elena was constructed as a victim. In the other, in which the sign, 'the prostitute' stuck to her body, she was transformed into "*an accessory (...) if not the main suspect*".

Jenna told another story of how devastating the consequences of 'the prostitute' sticking to your body could be:

J – Last fall I was raped by some guy that saw me in the pub. I had never talked to him, he just chose me and found out who I was. He hacked in to my computer, got all my passwords and found out what I'm working with. He went to my place and was like – I own you now! I was like what the fuck am I supposed to do? He will tell everyone. He raped me and it was for a long fucking while. I called 911 twice. I managed to get the phone into the bathroom. I couldn't say anything but I thought I'll call and then they will understand that I can't talk, but they just hung up on me. So I started sending panic text messages to my friends and told them - Call the cops and tell them to come to this address. I can't get out. In the end the cops came, they were really good, they realized immediately that I was completely wrecked. I was hysterical when they came. They brought me to the rape clinic and there they were wonderful as well. I was like – Shit, this is really working. They are really good at this. The day after I went to a second interrogation and I continued answering questions and that's when they started... they had found out what I was doing for a living and they didn't like it. They closed off my apartment for two days, you know as a crime scene. They were like – We have to make sure he was really on the scene, even though they caught him on the scene.

A – What?

J – They took everything computers, cell phones... and I was like what do I do now? I asked them if I could have some numbers so that I could call some friends and they were like – No, you can't, this is evidence. I managed to get to a friend's place and slept there for the coming two days but I was really angry with the police.

A – Why do you think they did what they did?

J – They wanted... I think that when they get a chance to get into someone's

apartment they look for anything that they can use against you. They found an illegal pepper spray that somebody had given me years ago, I had forgotten that I even had it. They wanted to charge me with possession of illegal weapon and then the rape charges were dropped two weeks later because of lack of evidence. The hacking of my computer charge was dropped after three and a half months since I refused to give them my clients. I told them that – If I give you my clients, that will get out and I will never again be able to do anything, I will be destroyed, my job, my reputation and everything. They were like – Well if you don't help us, we won't do anything for you. And then they totally harassed me, they had me under surveillance to try to get to clients and I was like – Okay, did you see who was banging on my door today and threw things on my window? And they were like – We don't have you under surveillance. So I had to terminate my first hand contract and I'm still moving around because I'm scared.

A – Of that guy?

J – Yes, of that guy. He had been reported nineteen times for a bunch of different things, he was twenty-one.

A – And still they dropped the charges.

J – Yes, because of lack of evidence even though they caught him in the act and I was bloody when they were examining me and it was... the police, the police and my lawyer said that it was a solid case – He won't get away with this, we've found all your passwords, pictures and everything in his computer.

A – You had a lawyer?

J – Yes, but he was like – It's probably because you won't cooperate. So I'm the lowest of the low to the police. The hatred I feel against them... I've been raised to cooperate with the police, to be accommodating and nice and help them to do their job. But the hatred I feel against them is immense. How could they do that to me after everything I've been through? Society just spits at me. I managed to find this number that they call from to find out where escorts live, they pretend to be clients. I found out about that number, they called me about a month ago, then they sent a car over here... But since then I've started a thread at a forum about that it's us escorts and clients against the police, they will put us under surveillance... we will see what happens now that we're thousands of people who keep track of them instead of them keeping track of us, I want to destroy things for them like they have destroyed things for me.

A – I understand that you're angry.

J – I'm terribly angry and I can't call the police about anything because they have my name and they know that I'm a whore.

A – What does that matter?

J – I wonder the same thing.

A – It shouldn't matter.

J – No but if I call them to come here for anything then they will have my address and then they would put me under surveillance... I don't know what to do. If you've been placed outside society by society then you have to learn how to get by on your own.

A – It's awful.

J – So, I don't believe in Swedish welfare, it's a joke.

Jenna's story speaks of the effects of the differentiation between legitimate and illegitimate lives. It entails two instances of the prostitute sign sticking to her body, the first time she was constructed as an appropriate target for violence and subjected to threats and violence by the man who raped her, the second time she was reconstructed from deserving to undeserving victim by the police. The experience of being constructed as an illegitimate life had Jenna stating that she could no longer rely on police protection, they 'have her name and know that she is a whore'. As a 'prostitute'/whore' Jenna experienced that she was "*placed outside society by society*" and concluded that she has to learn how to 'get by on her own'.

As stated before, being encountered as an object of hate affected the participants severely. Some of the women like Maria and Jenna stopped reporting crimes after their negative experiences with the police, not being listened to or taken seriously reinforced their status as appropriate targets for violence and further marginalized them. Some women's narratives, like Lydia's and Therese's, spoke of the physiological symptoms and emotional distress caused by the violence they had been subjected to. To some women, the hated body turned into an object of hate for themselves as well, leaving them struggling with feelings of self-loathing. You might remember how Nadia spoke of herself as 'the only person on earth that god did not love'. When Nadia turned eighteen she did, despite her struggle with her sense of self-worth, decide to report the older man who sexually abused her when she was in her teens. The case was dropped due to lack of evidence. In our interview Nadia concluded how "*when you're not being listened to, it makes you go quiet. It makes you not say anything. It makes you not ask for help.*" For many years Nadia kept quiet despite repeatedly being subjected to sexual violence. However, when she was raped recently she decided to report it. The man was convicted. This event marked a shift in Nadia's narrative.

It really made me grow, it gave me a sense of self-worth. Maybe there are good people. Maybe I can be listened to and, not only that but also have him convicted. It was like... For the first time somebody told me that it is actually wrong to do this, not only to everybody else but also to me. Like I said before, I had thought for many years that it was better that I dealt with all the scum, all the johns, and all the dirt bags, then others don't have to. I mean I felt like I was worthless anyway so I might as well take it and save everybody else, which was ludicrous thinking but that's the way I was thinking. So to get the opposite confirmed... That's what I feel about the judicial system...It's a pity that so few women are listened to, because if they had been then they could have grown from there and... So many women could have gotten to know that this is wrong. You can't do this, not to me, not to you, not to anyone.

Being listened to and taken seriously in court, Nadia's status as undeserving victim was challenged rather than confirmed. She was reconstructed as a worthy subject, as a legitimate life. She stated "*For the first time somebody told me it is actually wrong to do this, not only to everybody else but also to me*".

In this section, I have explored the participants' narratives about the clever tricks and covert practices that constitute their tactics to manage violence. By engaging with these narratives I have discussed how, when the prostitute sign was stuck to their bodies whether by a client, the police or in court, the participants were transformed to 'appropriate targets for violence' and undeserving victims. Being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entails physical risk. Even though far from all of the participants had been subjected to violence by a client, the affective economy of hatred affected how their bodies moved in space and how they conducted their prostitution practice. The participants' narratives about being constructed as undeserving victims speak loudly of 'the absent presence of historicity'. Despite the fact that the institutionalized discourse of Swedish prostitution policy and law is that of 'the prostitute' as 'the victim of patriarchy par excellence', who should be protected by the law the participants' narratives resonate from the nineteenth century construction of 'the prostitute' as illegitimate life and undeserving victim. As Ahmed states, repression always leaves its traces in the present. As the whore-prostitute construct still operates as a facilitator of patriarchy and as an important figure in the governing of female sexuality the repetition of the sign may be understood as an effect of a history that has stayed open.

In the last section I will continue to explore the prostitute sign by engaging with the participants' narratives about managing stigma.

### **9.3 Managing stigma**

In the two previous sections, I discussed the numerous different tactics the participants employed in order to manage emotion and manage violence. I also discussed the interconnectedness of physical risk and emotional risk and how the social location and personal biography of the participants affected their ability to manage emotion and manage violence. Connected to both emotional risk and physical risk is the prostitution stigma. Being reterritorialized in the dispositive of prostitution entailed that the participants risked being reterritorialized as particular kinds of subjects, as 'prostitutes'.

In the previous section, I discussed how the prostitute sign stuck to the participants' bodies and transformed them into objects of hate. Ahmed argues that 'what sticks' shows us what a sign has 'travelled through' what it has 'gathered onto its surface' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 91). In Chapter Five, I explored how the prostitute sign travelled through the twentieth century and how its boundaries were renegotiated as new meanings were gathered onto its surface. When 'the prostitute' emerged in mid nineteenth century, she was constituted as the gendered and classed Other of 'respectable feminine sexuality'. In regulationist discourse, 'the prostitute' was, through its relation to other signs such as 'the whore' and 'the working class woman', constructed as diseased body, immoral and unchaste woman and undeserving victim. In the reverse discourse of the repeal movement, she was constructed as a 'fallen woman', a passive victim in need of rescue. Two prevailing images of 'the prostitute' was produced, one as the immoral, diseased and degenerate victimizer, and the other as the spoiled, damaged and passive victim (Kuo, 2002, p. 58). In the twentieth century, 'the prostitute' was, in psychoanalytic and sexological discourse, reconstructed as a pathological sexual figure, and later on in radical feminist discourse as a 'the victim of patriarchy par excellence'. The present construction of 'the prostitute' contains echoes from all these discourses. When the prostitute sign sticks to a body, 'what sticks' could thus be very different things. This entails that the prostitute sign do not only evoke feelings of contempt or hatred but also feelings such as pity or excitement.

Throughout the analysis I have explored how the participants position themselves against 'the prostitute', resisting certain meaning sticking to their bodies. In Chapter Seven, I spoke of how multiple counter-narratives appeared in the participants beginning stories, as the participants positioned themselves both against ideas

about 'the prostitute' as 'undeserving victim' and as 'passive victim, passive body'. In Chapter Eight I spoke of how the participants positioned themselves against 'the (street) prostitute' and constructed the street as dangerous place in order to place the stigma of prostitution elsewhere. I also spoke of how some participants, by framing their experience within the parameters of conventional heterosexual romance relationships challenged their status as deviant - as outside of heteronormality. In this chapter, I have relayed how 'doing respectable feminine sexuality' and 'doing class' was employed as a tactic to refute meanings as vulgar, dirty and sexually indiscriminatory sticking to the body.

In Chapter Six, I framed the research participant's narration of their prostitution experience as a political action refocusing from *what* one is: 'prostitute', 'woman', 'middle class', 'victimized', et cetera, to *who* one is in one's unique existence, an existence that always exceeds any 'what'. I argued that the refocusing from the 'what' to the 'who' is particularly important in research on women involved in prostitution considering that these women continue to be reduced to mere paradigm and metaphor, to 'prostitute'. Kottman writes about how the pain that stigma causes does not simply come from the fact that "*one is called a hurtful name, or not solely from the sedimented history or semantics of that name; but moreover from the feeling that who one is, is not being addressed*" (Cavarero, 2000, p. xx). When 'the prostitute' sign sticks to the body, one's singularity is ignored. No matter 'what sticks', Kottman argues that it is that total disregard for *who* one is that makes stigmatization so painful.

The participants' narratives on managing stigma speak of how the prostitution stigma equated act and actor. When entering into prostitution the participants *became* 'prostitutes' in the eyes of (some) others. The participants explicitly reflected on and rejected the equating of act and actor in their narratives. Selma spoke of prostitution as something *she does*, not something that defines *who she is*:

A – Has it become part of your identity, do you think of yourself as an escort, sex seller or sex worker, do you think of yourself in that way?

S – In one way I do, but it's not that it *is* me, because I'm not a painter... I don't know, it's...

A – You don't feel that you are what you do, kind of?

S – No I don't, and if I quit, then I quit. Somebody told me... that person had heard... it was before, when I was getting shoes. He had heard that I was selling sex and I didn't have sex with that man so I said – No, I don't! And

he said – Good, once a whore always a whore! I was like - What!?! I worked as a telemarketer once, I really sucked at it. Is that the same thing, once a telemarketer, always a telemarketer? It's an insane thing to say. It's just sex, just because there's money involved, does that make it dirty?

A – Yes, and most of all, does that make it stick to your identity?... Nobody would say once a telemarketer, always a telemarketer.

S – No, it's really weird!

A – What do you think he meant by it?

S – That you're spoiled.

Selma resisted the equating of act and actor in her narrative by questioning that *what she does*, prostitution, would equate *who she is*. In patriarchal discourse, a woman defined as a 'whore' is, as Selma's male acquaintance suggested, spoiled. The whore stigma, although it explicitly targets women involved in prostitution, is central to the governing of all female sexuality. Gail Pheterson (1996, p. 12) argues that often times 'non-prostitute women' struggle against the whore stigma by dis-identifying with 'prostitutes', by claiming not to be 'prostitutes', 'sluts', or 'whores'. As previously discussed, this tactic was also employed by the participants. Some of the participants dis-identified with 'the prostitute' by positioning themselves against stereotypical ideas about 'the prostitute', placing the stigma elsewhere, with 'the real prostitutes', 'the street walkers', 'the drug addicted', 'the vulgar', 'the sexually abused', et cetera.

While some participants attempted to manage the stigma by dis-identifying with 'prostitutes', positioning themselves against 'the real prostitutes', others attempted to challenge the idea of 'the prostitute' as such. Therese, who both had experiences of being homeless and of prostitution, struggled with how, or if, to define herself in relation to those experiences.

A – I was thinking about what you said before, when you said that when you were sleeping outdoors you thought of yourself as someone getting by but really, when you think about it, you were a bum. I wonder... I mean what you did *was* to get by. Sometimes I think that these definitions... I mean what is a bum really?

T – ...Yeah...

A – ...or a prostitute for that sake?

T – It's a stereotype created by the tabloids, preferably with bold headlines. It's a derogative term. That's what's difficult, you're equated with a derogative term...

A – Exactly, but behind that there are always human beings who are trying to get by somehow...

T – Yes, I don't even think that the most worn down persons... like these older men who sit on the square all the time, I don't even think that they think of themselves as bums, even though they fit the stereotype for what you should be like – you should be red-faced, you should have bad teeth, be disheveled, have dirty clothes, a bag of beer and no goals. Maybe they too think that things will work out somehow sometime soon. I mean... no so who is that really?

Therese suggested the obvious that is often obscured - even people who fit the stereotype cannot be reduced to a stigmatized identity. Kuo (2002, p. 60) argues that 'hegemonic wisdom' holds that women's lives and realities could be fully understood through 'the prostitute construct'. The participants challenged this idea by, even though they fit the stereotype, claiming their singularity. By the end of our first interview I asked Selma if there was anything she would like to say before we ended, she said:

S – No, but I feel... I'm probably a typical prostitute... I mean, when I think about my childhood and stuff... I think it's a little funny that this is where I ended up.

A – Typical in what sense?

S – Well, you know my parents are divorced, I was raped, you know stuff like that, typical stuff you know... but I'm not a tragic girl, I don't think I am.

Even though Selma's experiences in one sense fits the stereotype of 'the prostitute', as a person with a troubled childhood and as a victim of sexual abuse, she resists being defined as a tragic person, "*a tragic girl*".

Alicia also resisted being reduced to a stereotype:

A – Do the stereotypes ever get to you?

A – No, because I know I'm not that stereotype! Sure I had a somewhat rough childhood, but we've all had our problems. My mom, hasn't always been doing so well. But I haven't been subjected to abuse or anything... I haven't really been beaten, I mean it has happened, I think it has happened three times during my childhood that my mom has beaten me and then she has been really unwell, because she isn't doing so well, she hasn't been doing so well. So I haven't had a tragic childhood. It has been a little chaotic, I've grown up... I have moved a lot

and I've lived in a few foster homes but it's always been voluntary placements. So, there has been some chaos, but not the worst kind. I was a pretty well-behaved teenager, I drank quite a lot of alcohol for some time but I lost my virginity when I was eighteen... I was pretty well-behaved.

A – Do you feel like these ideas...

A - ... Of course you could claim that because I had a mom who was psychologically distressed, or because I moved a lot, I have some sort of attachment problem. You could twist it and turn it whichever way you want to, and even if that's the case... maybe that's the case, but if this fulfills me, compensates for that, isn't that good?

Even though Alicia had experiences that are part of the personage of 'the prostitute', she refused to be equated with a stereotype. She questioned the idea that her involvement in prostitution could be entirely explained by her background, or at least challenged being defined as a passive victim of her experiences.

The participants resisted the conflation of 'the prostitute' and themselves both by dis-identifying with 'the prostitute' and by challenging the idea of 'the prostitute' as such. By their tactics to manage stigma, the participants resisted the prostitute sign sticking to their bodies and thereby them being reduced to a stigmatized identity, a disembodied stereotype. In this section, I will further explore the participants' narratives about tactics to manage stigma. The participants mainly spoke of two kinds of tactics, tactics of telling counter-narratives and tactics of secrecy. I will explore these tactics by engaging with the participants' narratives, I will also explore how the social locations and personal biographies of the participants made some of the participants better equipped than others to manage stigma.

### Tactics of telling counter-narratives

One of the main tactics the participants employed in order to manage stigma was to talk back to the cultural narratives that had scripted them as particular kinds of subjects. Many of the participants directly stated that they chose to participate in the study to challenge stereotypical ideas about 'the prostitute', by telling 'their story'. As have been explored throughout the text, there are several different cultural narratives about 'the prostitute'. The participants embraced multiple perspectives and interpretations, and drew on and countered different narratives at different points in narrating their prostitution experience. As became clear when exploring the participants' beginning stories, different participants

treated different narratives about 'the prostitute' as dominant. While most of the participants narrated their experiences, implicitly or explicitly refuting different narratives about 'the prostitute', not every dominant narrative was equally relevant to everyone. Some participants mostly positioned themselves against the notion of 'the prostitute' as 'undeserving victim', others mostly positioned themselves against the notion of 'the prostitute' as passive body, passive victim'. As the participants' story world has revealed there is a polyvalence of discourses that shape and organize prostitution in contemporary Sweden. In positioning themselves against different notions of 'the prostitute', the participants engaged with these discourses in different ways. I have previously discussed how the participants' narratives were entangled with discourse on neo-liberal subjectivity, 'respectable feminine sexuality', heteronormality et cetera. I will now turn to how Maria, Elena and Emma engaged with sex work discourse in resisting different meanings being ascribed to their bodies.

Prostitution is within sex work discourse theorized as work. Framing prostitution as sex work could be seen as an attempt to normalize prostitution as a respectable profession, countering ideas of prostitution as deviance. Sex work discourse entails the normalization of people involved in prostitution as service workers or care giving professionals. Equating prostitution with work was quite rare among the participants. However, that did not mean that the participants did not make sense of certain aspects of their prostitution experience by comparing it to work or addressing it in professional terms. As discussed before, constructing prostitution as work emerged as both a tactic to manage emotion - to draw clear boundaries between your private and professional self, and a tactic to manage violence - by creating and maintaining clear rules and regulations allowing control. Constructing prostitution as work could also be a tactic to manage stigma as sex work discourse provides women involved in prostitution with a new progressive (counter)identity and a discursive framework to talk back to discourses on prostitution constructing them as passive and unworthy subjects.

Maria's narrative about her prostitution experience was somewhat entangled with sex work discourse. The entanglement of Maria's narrative and sex work discourse was manifested in the terms she used narrating her experience, terms of market economy such as: market segments, customer focus, marketing, services, as well as in her business-like approach to prostitution. Maria had for example developed several different profiles meant to appeal to different segments of customers. She said:

M – Well, I claim that it isn't wrong to have an academic degree when you are selling sex. Then most people say – No, why? But it's actually not... it's not bad to think of market segments. It's not bad to be able to create your own webpage. You run it as a businesswoman really.

A – Mm

M – Some people say – No, it's just about laying on your back. But no it's not! Maria spoke of her experience of prostitution in business terms something she 'approaches as a businesswoman' with an academic background. Yet when asked whether she thought of selling sex as a profession she stated:

M – No, I actually have a hard time seeing it as a profession, it's not a profession for me at least. Maybe I could... I think it should be acknowledged as a profession for those who want that. For those who regard it as their profession. I think that's really important. But it's not my primary profession, when it has been I have generally felt worse.

A – I see.

M – Then you feel forced to go out.

A – Right

M – Now it's... more of a choice in one way. It's pride for me not to have it... prostitution [whispering], as my primary occupation.

The two extracts above illustrate how Maria on one hand spoke of her experience of prostitution in professional terms but yet on the other hand did not make sense of prostitution as a profession, at least not her profession. This could be perceived as a mere contradiction. Paying closer attention to Maria's narrative, it appears more as a manifestation of different layers of meaning. In the first extract Maria was, by framing prostitution in professional terms, talking back to the idea of 'the prostitute' as passive body, as somebody who just 'lays on her back'. By appropriating the terms of market economy in her narration Maria reclaimed her agency. In the second extract another layer of meaning emerged, Maria contested seeing prostitution as 'her profession'. Having felt worse when prostitution had been her primary source of income was made sense of as related to lack of choice, feeling coerced to see clients. Maria employed sex work discourse to contest meanings ascribed to her body and self, constituting her as a particular kind of subject, as passive and unprofessional.

Elena also drew on sex work discourse as a practice of resistance. During and after the rape trials, Elena was told not to tell anybody about her prostitution experience. Even though she had been subjected to a crime, she was still treated as blameworthy:

E – Don't tell anybody! You will destroy your life if you tell anybody! God it was hard because *I* was dirty, and I somehow felt... I mean, I was really angry! Why should I feel dirty? I was angry because it's unfair. It's unfair to tell someone that – You are a victim, and then turn around and say – But you are also dirty. It's not only about the rape but also about the prostitution, or rather the other way around it's not only about the prostitution but also about the rape. You don't talk about it. You don't talk about it and... I was so angry because what the fuck does that mean - that you don't talk about it? I know it makes people uncomfortable and it's not something you talk about at any moment but if somebody asks I think that I should be able to talk about it without being afraid. So I told you that I had started to identify with it [prostitution], but I also developed an identity... or not an identity but a personal strength in prostitution. This was around the same time it became a job. It led to – Fuck you for talking about your job. I can talk about my job too! I don't regret it today... but I am well aware that the majority of the people who asked got to know exactly what it was that I did. (...)

A – Was this part of some sort of rebellion against being expected to keep silent about it?

E – Yes, it was a rebellion against being expected to keep silent... If I had been treated better, not as somebody that should be hid away I don't think I would have been that open.... But it led to a rebellion and it led to a desire, that came further down the line, to stop trying to fit in and be normal, that's how it happened.

By publically committing herself to sex work Elena took a stand against the expectation to keep silent that has been imposed on her, the expectation to keep silent, to not expose herself as 'a prostitute' and subsequently as 'dirty'. In her narrative she talked back to the idea of 'the prostitute as dirty' she also made sense of her publically committing herself to sex work as an act of resistance against this idea. In doing this she spoke of developing a personal strength in prostitution. Maria's and Elena's narratives and their identifying with sex work, or framing of their prostitution experiences in the terms of sex work, could be interpreted as a tactic to manage stigma, to refute the meanings ascribed to them as 'prostitutes', as 'dirty, passive and unworthy'. The sex work discourse provided them with a new progressive (counter)identity, and a discursive framework to talk back to stigmatizing discourses on prostitution.

While most of the participants' narratives contained/constituted counter-narratives, some of the participants narrated about experiences of creating

public counter-narratives. Emma and I got in touch through a sex workers' rights organization Emma is in her early forties, she was no longer involved in prostitution but had many years of experience of the sex industry and of sex work activism. As a sex work activist, Emma attempted to publically resist stigmatizing representations of women involved in prostitution, she spoke of how she first got involved in sex work activism:

E – When I got back to Sweden in -94, there was this huge porn debate, it had started and everyone was like... it was really crazy. That's when all the newspapers discussed whether politicians should be allowed to stay at hotels with porn channels.

A – Right.

E – We would never discuss that today, it wouldn't be an issue, but this was going on for quite a while, there was no stopping it. This *Shocking Truth* documentary [documentary about exploitation and violence in the porn industry] was shown to crying women in the parliament and it was completely blown out of proportion. I was twenty-five, twenty-six back then and I thought they were completely crazy. (...) So when I came back to Sweden I don't think I thought that much, it was more like...

A – A reaction?

E – Yes it was a reaction to everything being so crazy. (...) I guess always when you get into something as a new activist, any kind of activist, I guess you're kind of naive and maybe not so smart in your activism and... I talk about it sometimes today when I lecture, at that time it was so important to me to show that girls in the sex industry are *so normal*, we are so damn normal! Most of us don't do drugs, most of us don't walk the street, most of us haven't been subjected to sexual abuse, most of us don't have men who beat us, most of us don't have pimps, all of that was really important.

A – Right.

E – And since then I've seen many activists who do the same thing and at the same time... It's because you're trying to avoid the social stigma, which is normal.

A – Yes.

E - But at the same time, in your eagerness to prove that you're normal, as if that's something to strive for, you kind of forget why you became an activist. Why you became an activist is often about wanting to be there for the people who do drugs, for the people who walk the street, for the people who have been subjected to sexual abuse, they who almost are the stereotype.

A – Right.

E – It’s for them that you start out as an activist, the people who become activists usually have... at least if they’re strong activists they usually live pretty well functioning lives, otherwise you wouldn’t have the energy to do activism, at least it’s pretty unusual. So that was the biggest lesson I had to learn I guess.

As I stated in Chapter Five, sex work discourse sometimes functions as a reverse discourse in which ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as a counter identity to ‘the prostitute’. While ‘the prostitute’ is constructed as ‘a victim in need of protection’ ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as ‘a strong agent’, while ‘the prostitute’ is constructed as ‘exploited in prostitution’ ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as ‘an empowered worker’, while ‘the prostitute’ is constructed as ‘a disempowered sexual victim’ ‘the sex worker’ is constructed as ‘powerful sexual being’. Emma spoke of how she in her early activism participated in such a reverse discourse as a tactic to challenge stereotypical ideas about ‘the prostitute’.

E – I couldn’t agree with this stereotype that was presented of this degraded, crying woman because that wasn’t true for all the people that I had met, I mean I had met her too, but somehow these stereotypes are dangerous, people don’t fit in to little boxes.

A – No, and it’s really interesting what you describe, that your initial reaction to these stereotypical images was to paint a different stereotypical image.

E – Yes sure.

A – I think that’s symptomatic, that’s often what happens in the prostitution debate.

E – It’s all very black or white. I never went that far that I was propagating for everyone being happy, that was not the norm that I was after. I mean that’s what you’re accused of a lot, the happy hooker, it was more some kind of normality norm, we’re not happier or unhappier than others, we’re normal. It was very important and at the same time when I think of all the sex workers that I know, they are quite many, sure there are a few who are very normal, but most of them aren’t in one way or another. That’s what attracted me to this business, all these amazing people. To be in a strip club, sure there can be a lot of cattiness and talking trash among the girls, that’s for some unfathomable reason common in workplaces with a lot of women, but it’s also a work place where you can talk about most things, forbidden things and the example I use a lot, because I get the question -Isn’t it more common with sexual abuse? Then I say if it’s more common or not I have no clue because there is no good research.

(...) But then at the same time - do I know more sex workers who have been subjected to sexual abuse? Yes. But between us we don't have any problems with talking about it. If you work at a university for example I hardly think that it's something you would tell your colleagues in the coffee room but with us there's a space for it and no one will say - Poor, poor you, if you don't want to hear - Poor, poor you! You're not treated differently it's like - Okay. And if you think it's really hard then people think that's okay but if you think - Oh well, you're allowed to think oh well as well. So there's a space there that is not always there for women. It's such a contradiction to me, the idea of these weak women who are such victims and, I mean, I have friends who have been subjected to horrible things but they are some of the strongest women I know.

A - Right.

E - And then to be labeled a victim... I'm not sure about that.

As opposed to in her early activism Emma did in her narrative create a counter-narrative that was not a reverse discourse. With the starting point that "*people do not fit into little boxes*", she challenged the idea of 'the prostitute' as a degraded and passive victim, without denying that women involved in prostitution often have experiences of being victimized. In her narrative, she thereby implicitly challenged the neoliberal construct of 'the victim' as an identity category, claiming that to have been victimized does not equate being a 'weak' and 'passive' person.

### Tactics of secrecy

Despite dominant narratives about 'the prostitute' having been challenged by personal narratives about prostitution experience both in feminist research and sex work activism, women involved in prostitution are still stigmatized. While most of the participants attempted to challenge the stigma by telling counter-narratives, rejecting ideas about them being conflated with 'the prostitute', the negative, potentially devastating consequences that the prostitute sign sticking to the body had, led to the majority of the participants keeping their involvement in prostitution a secret, and thereby managing the stigma of prostitution by tactics of secrecy. Fear of disapproval, discrimination and shame caused many of the participants to lie about their involvement in prostitution and/or to isolate themselves to minimize the risks of being exposed.

Maria had told a few of her close friends about her involvement in prostitution, but to most she kept it a secret. She was well aware of the potential risks of being exposed as a 'prostitute':

You always risk being exposed and that's a high price to pay. If it gets out it can have devastating consequences. You can lose your job, you can be forced to move, you can lose touch with your family. There are women who have lost custody of their kids. If I had lived in a rental apartment, if my landlord would have found out that I sell sex, even if I don't do it from my home, he could be accused of procuring and what happens then? He will evict me. There are women who have lost their homes. There are definitely risks and it's a high price to pay.

Being exposed as 'prostitute' could entail having to "*pay a high price*". Eva was one of the few participants who was able to be open about her involvement in prostitution, her children were grown, she had her own company and did not see any immediate risks with exposing herself as someone involved in prostitution. However, she realized that she was in a privileged position:

E – I don't recommend anyone to sell sex really, I mean not in like – Yes of course you should do it! It depends on who the person is and what kind of vibe I get from the email. I mean the person herself must.... I usually write – Sit down in peace and quiet and write a list with pros and cons. What are the pros with starting to sell sex and what are the cons? And then I also write that there are a lot of... The stigmatization for example, you can't... I'm not used to that, me and a few others are able to be open about things. It's really just the landlord, otherwise I don't have to worry as much about being anonymous. But if you have small children for example, if you have a job... I'm my own, but if you have a job or you're in school and people find out, then you can destroy your whole career and it's really important to keep that in mind. It's a very, very lonely job, or hobby, I don't call it a job. It's not for everybody. To carry around a secret can bring the strongest person down. (...) You're living a lie basically and I don't have to live a lie.

A – No you haven't had to keep it to yourself in that sense.

E – No but many... most, I think, do, and it must make them feel bad.

Indeed, having to live a double life, lying about their involvement in prostitution did cause distress to many of the participants. The emotional consequences of the prostitution stigma were a real concern for many of the participants. Keeping her involvement in prostitution a secret led to Maya having nightmares about being revealed:

It's not like I'm ashamed or anything, but I don't know... Well, I've had a lot of nightmares about being undressed in public and about hiding something and it being found out, I had hidden something, I had hidden a vase or something from my mom and she was like – What is this? What is this? I have a lot of dreams about being revealed. I guess it's pretty natural since I'm working really hard on hiding something right now... But it feels bad because I can't tell anyone, Or I don't want to tell anyone, I feel like you can't really trust anyone else but yourself... So I try not to tell anyone.

While Maya stated that she did not feel ashamed about being involved in prostitution, she was aware of the consequences being revealed could have for her personal relationships. In order to manage the stigma, some of the participants preferred to limit their personal relationships to people who they would not have to lie to. These participants talked about isolation as a tactic of secrecy.

While some of the participants talked about isolation as a consequence of prostitution others talked about it as a tactic to manage stigma. In order to protect herself from the negative consequences of being revealed as 'prostitute' Lydia preferably associated with other women involved in prostitution and clients:

My regulars, they call me. The ones I have had as regulars, some of them I have had like friends. They call me at times and ask me out for a cup of coffee or dinner. There was this one guy that I even used to go with to the park, to go for a walk. He's not married though, I've been to his place so I know he's not married, he lives on his own. Since I know that, I don't see any problem with going out with him and he's not ashamed of me or afraid that someone will see me and I feel okay about it... So sometimes we go for walks in the park, we sit at a café and have a cup of coffee and talk, sometimes for hours, three, four hours... so it's people like him... the type of connection I have with my clients, I don't think I can have that with anyone else. It wouldn't be the same thing. Even if I meet a person who doesn't know that I've been a... or that I am a prostitute, it wouldn't be the same thing. I would be afraid that that person would find out. What if he finds out, then he wouldn't want to be with me. It's the same with women, if I meet a woman and we become friends, then I would still think – What if she finds out that I've been a prostitute, then she will say – No, I don't want to have anything to do with her, that's fucking gross! Sadly enough, that's what it's like. If you've ended up in this situation with prostitution and you live the kind of life that I live now, you live more or less on your own, not alone

really but there are always places you can go, but you're excluded, you can't get an ordinary social network, with ordinary people. You're always scared that people might find out. With clients it's different, if he wants to take me for a walk or a cup of coffee then it's up to him and then it's okay.

The stigma of prostitution made Lydia limit her network to other women involved in prostitution and her regular clients. Her involvement in prostitution had marginalizing effects in several different ways.

### Effects of the stigma depending on social location and personal biography

The participants narrated different tactics to manage the consequences of the stigma. These tactics mainly consisted of telling counter-narratives, either dis-identifying with 'the prostitute', or challenging the prostitute construct, and; tactics of secrecy, lying about their involvement in prostitution and/or isolating themselves to minimize the risk of being exposed. The prostitution stigma potentially has devastating consequences for women involved in prostitution. The participants were, similarly to when it came to emotional and physical risk, more or less well equipped to manage the risks that the prostitution stigma entailed.

As stated in Chapter Eight, women involved in street prostitution are generally more stigmatized than women involved in indoor prostitution. The public character of street prostitution also entails greater risks of being exposed as a 'prostitute' in public. Lydia who sold sex from the street spoke of the prostitution stigma as permanent, even if she would leave prostitution she imagined that the stigma would remain:

It's a label... it's almost like you get at tattoo and you can't remove it, even if you try to scrape it off it's still there. When you remove a tattoo it leaves a scar and then people can still see – Oh, you had a tattoo, I can tell you had a tattoo there. – Yes, I did.

To Lydia the prostitution stigma appeared as permanent as a tattoo, even if she would exit prostitution, attempt to 'remove the tattoo', it would leave 'a scar' visible for others to see. The participants who were involved in indoor prostitution generally positioned themselves against 'the (street) prostitute' in order to place the stigma elsewhere. As discussed in Chapter Eight, the relocation of prostitution from the street to the internet entailed a new space in which new

practices and new subjects could emerge. By engaging in forms of prostitution that resembled non-commercial sex and by inscribing their experience within the frames of heterosexual romance relationship, these participants attempted to avoid the prostitute sign sticking to their bodies.

In the social category of 'the prostitute', numerous categories of difference intersect, 'the prostitute' is gendered, classed as well as racialized. Participants who had privileged class/racial positions were more able to resist ideas about 'the prostitute' as poor and disadvantaged. Maria for example positioned herself against the idea of 'the prostitute' as the weaker party in the prostitution transaction:

M – Society blames the client more... by it being punishable, by it being illegal and they want to, so to speak, protect the weaker party. It's an equation that doesn't always measure up though. I'm not always the weaker party.

A – Right.

M – It's another of these clichés that it just has to be that I'm the weaker party. In many ways I'm not. Sometimes I have higher education than my clients, I notice pretty quickly that I would beat them in Jeopardy, and that I'm... that I'm brighter, that I have a better job than them, I probably make more money, I probably live better... It would be the fact that I'm a woman if anything, but I don't always feel like the weaker party.

As Maria's class background, educational qualifications and living situation does not even closely resemble stereotypical ideas about 'the prostitute', she was better equipped to position herself against these ideas than many of the other participants.

Rebecca also spoke of her social location as an advantage when it came to managing the stigma.

R – I don't smoke, I never drink alcohol, I'm never out partying, I'm always home during the weekends, I don't even have a stereo. I never watch TV. I'm a pretty normal and well-behaved person. (...) Since I live such a respectable life and have such a respectable appearance, I mean the way I look... If there was a rumor I hardly think that anyone would believe it.

A – You don't fit the stereotypical image?

R – No, when you never go to the pub, never chase after men or anything and is a very well-behaved person, then it's hard for people to believe, I imagine. So

I don't worry about rumors being spread about me, if there were I think that people would think – My goodness they must have drunk too much or had a dream!

As illustrated in the previous section, some of the participants who did not have Maria's or Rebecca's privileged class position attempted to 'do respectable feminine sexuality' and 'do class' as a tactic to avoid the prostitution stigma.

Apart from social location, personal biography also affected how well the participants were able to manage the stigma. Women like Elena and Nadia, who had been sexualized and stigmatized as 'whores', had internalized the stigma before entering into prostitution. As previously discussed, they even made sense of their entry into prostitution as conditioned by them internalizing the stigma, being constituted as a 'whore', a 'sexual being for others'. Participants with such experiences generally were less well equipped to protect themselves against the consequences of the stigma.

Managing stigma was essential to all the participants, while some participants mostly spoke of struggling with not internalizing the stigma others were more concerned with not being exposed as 'prostitutes' by others. In the following section, I will explore two narratives about when stigma management tactics fail.

### When stigma management tactics fail

The effects of the prostitution stigma constitute a significant risk for women involved in prostitution. Some participants told stories about stigma management tactics failing. I will present two of these stories in what follows. While Therese's story is about internalizing the stigma, Yulia's story is about being exposed as a 'prostitute'.

Therese spoke of managing the stigma of prostitution by dis-identifying with the prostitute. In the beginning of her prostitution experience, Therese managed the stigma of prostitution by not defining what she did as prostitution, and therefore not defining herself as a 'prostitute':

A – Did you ever think about it as prostitution back then?

T – No I didn't, not until... When there was more than one [client] I started to realize it. Or I realized that I was being paid to have sex. But it was... it was done in an okay way... I am well paid, I get to dress up and look good at least a couple of times per week. I get a lot of compliments and I get to go

on shopping sprees and just point at whatever I want... And I got clever to. I had them buy me expensive things that I later returned for cash. I wasn't at all interested in expensive jewellery or French lingerie, I wanted money so that I could survive, but I realized that there were those who thought that it felt less like prostitution to do things that way, instead of handing over the money when you were finished. I understood it so I played along. But no, I didn't really realize it and sometimes it is still hard for me to realize. You know when you watch somebody on TV sitting with their back to the camera, speaking with a distorted voice... then that is somebody else. – God it must have been dirty! They probably were in some sort of basement with dirty mattresses in a brothel somewhere... Or, they did it exactly the way I did it. It is very hard to fathom. It is not about me! Prostitution is something dirty and ugly, something imported from the Baltic States. How could an ordinary girl like me, pretty and nice, working at a café, appreciated at her workplace, how could she do this on the side? It is so difficult to get the two pictures to fit together. But in the beginning and in the middle it wasn't dirty, there were no disgusting mattresses in basements, it was tidy and nice, condoms, dancing and a little whipping.

Therese stated that she initially did not think of what she experienced as prostitution. She was driven by her desire to 'become her own', to keep the keys to her own 'lockable haven', not by a desire to sell sex. Discourses on prostitution as something dirty, ugly and foreign made Therese conclude that prostitution was not about her, the prostitute was (an)other woman, (an)other with a distorted voice, hidden face and awful experiences. Therese continued to explain how she with time turned into the Other, how the discourses about prostitution as something dirty, ugly and foreign *and* their connections with the non-discursive practice that she was involved in, with time turned her into 'a prostitute', perceiving herself as dirty and ugly, becoming foreign to herself.

I started to see myself in a different light. When I was out around people in regular clubs, regular places, places where I had always liked to be, all of a sudden I got this immense feeling of alienation, I thought it was showing. I had monologues in my head, while I was pretending to enjoy myself I was really thinking – If you would have known who I really am would you still like me? Do you know what I do when I'm not here? Doesn't it show, isn't it written on my forehead? My self-esteem was affected in a way that I didn't expect. When I started identifying with it - this is who I am, this is what I do, this is where I ended up, it all became very destructive.

When Therese internalized the stigma, what she did (prostitution) turned into who she became ('a prostitute'). The othering process that Therese spoke of in the interviews contained both discursive and non-discursive practices, practices that turned the flesh and blood body of Therese into a prostitute body.

I mean you can't be around ordinary people anymore. You strike yourself with the plague and all the time this – If you would have known who I am you wouldn't have liked me anymore. I'm not sure that they would have disliked me but you won't take the chance to find out and as long as you're in it and working with it you have that label. Now I'm not as labeled, now I can see people without thinking all the time – God I'm one of those cheap girls who sells herself. One of those that they think are disgusting, if they would have known they wouldn't even have let me sit on their chairs because maybe I'll infect them with HIV. When you're in it, you turn into this person. I can't really explain the psychological process, what happens, but it takes over much more than I thought it would. (...) I wasn't prepared for that. I thought I would be able to keep myself whole and just have it as a side thing, a nonexistent thing, something that doesn't really exist. Every time you close the door when someone has come, and lock the door and close the drapes, time stops existing until the person has left again and then you can live your life as usual. But it wasn't like that, it wasn't that easy.

Therese's narrative addressed the interconnected character of emotional and physical risk and stigma. The prostitution stigma equates the actor with the act. Having the prostitute sign stick to your body entails both emotional and physical risk. As stated before, managing emotion, managing violence and managing stigma cannot be entirely separated. Being subjected to violence causes both physical and emotional harm and can cause emotion management tactics to fail. If emotion management tactics fail there is a greater risk that one is subjected to violence. Moreover, as Therese's narrative indicates, if the prostitution stigma is internalized it can lead to less ability to protect oneself from both emotional and physical harm.

Yulia told a different story about stigma management tactics failing. Her story was not about internalizing the stigma but rather about being exposed as a 'prostitute'. Yulia was at that time in the process of exiting prostitution. She had graduated and had recently started to work at a bank. She was dating a man who she had met on the internet. He did not know about her involvement in prostitution. Yulia told the story about how he found out and what happened next.

He looked through my computer and he found all the chat logs. He's super jealous so he started to go through all my documents. When I came home he said – Oh, so you've worked as a whore! He had found the papers from when I reported that idiot [the ex-husband] to the police. He saw that it was stated that I had worked on the street. So he threatened me. I was working at the bank then, I had just graduated from university. I was a very respectable woman in every way and I had a lot of opportunities. And then he threatened me. I didn't know what he wanted. I mean he was just jealous, he was angry. – I'll send the papers to the bank and everyone will find out that you're a whore! I completely broke down. I got so scared. Everything that I had struggled to achieve in my life... from when I was in Russia and was trying to make enough money to move from there and then the struggle with this idiot, this pimp, to get my papers and studying at the university illegally to get my degree. Now I have my degree, now's when my career is supposed to start and then he comes and destroys everything.

Yulia had struggled to achieve what she had dreamed of – a life in Sweden, a university degree, a career. Her story speaks of how being exposed as a 'prostitute' threatened to destroy all that she had achieved. The man never realized his threat but the event left Yulia fearful of what being exposed as a 'prostitute' would entail. At the time for our interviews Yulia had exited prostitution but still struggled to manage the prostitution stigma. She was unable to speak of parts of her past.

Y –I have so much to tell. It would be great to write about it, to tell about it. I talked to my therapist about it, she thought it was completely out of question to go public. I'm still thinking about it, she thinks that it's better for me to keep it to myself. I don't know. I haven't made a decision yet. What do you think? Is it better to keep it to myself?

A – What are your thoughts on it?

Y –I guess it would be difficult because of the way prostitution is viewed. But at the same time society has to change its view on prostitution and not see prostitutes as depraved and I don't know how much you, who don't have any prostitution experience, can contribute to that. I mean, people remain prejudiced until they have to face their prejudices. (...) I mean, I don't feel like it's my quest in life but if no one stands up... Like Barack Obama for example, until a person proves that a black man can become president, people won't believe it. Now Barack Obama is there, a black man and president. (...) I feel like it's the same thing... until a person proves that... maybe as a president of a

big organization or maybe as some other form of very respectable person that people just can't stop respecting. It's not possible. That person is already the president, they can't say that he's a fucking nigger. They can't. But I have to be on this pedestal where people already respect me and *then* realize that I am actually this person that they have had all these prejudices about. Then they would really have to confront themselves. I don't know if I will be able to, or dare to, but that's my dream and my goal, to get that much power in life that I can change peoples' prejudices.

While Yulia had exited prostitution she still struggled to manage the prostitution stigma. Speaking publically about her experiences would undoubtedly entail a lot of risk. However, Yulia concludes that if no one comes out as a person with prostitution experience the stigma will keep its hold on people. Even after exiting prostitution.

#### **9.4 Concluding remarks**

The purpose of this chapter was to further explore the power, domination and resistance of the dispositif of prostitution by engaging with the participants' narratives about the multitude of tactics they employed in order to negotiate, resist and destabilize power.

Many of the participants narrated how they were propelled into prostitution by a desire to become other, 'become free', 'independent', 'their own', et cetera, others spoke of their entry into prostitution as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination. No matter how the participants made sense of their entry into prostitution, they all reencountered organisation as they were reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution. As stated before, while deterritorialization breaks up an established configuration through a line of flight, reterritorialization refers to the ways in which deterritorialized subjects recombine and enter into new relations of power and resistance.

The dispositif of prostitution constitutes a vast assemblage of competing and contradictory forces that define, order and regulate people involved in it. The dispositif of prostitution is largely structured by the patriarchal and capitalist striating forces of the sex industry. This, at the most fundamental level, entails that the participants were reterritorialized as 'commodified bodies'. Moreover, being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed the risk of the prostitute sign sticking to the participants bodies. Depending on 'what stuck',

the participants were transformed into different things, ranging from an object of hate and thereby an appropriate target for violence, to an 'undeserving victim' or a 'passive victim'.

The participants' narratives spoke of how being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed both physical and emotional risk. While a few of the participants were involved in sex worker's rights organizations or other political organizations, struggling to change the conditions of prostitution, most of them were not involved in any formal politics. By employing as a tool de Certeau's notion of tactics as a form of resistance in the micro-practices of everyday life, I have throughout the chapter explored how the participants, while being unable to produce and organize the space of prostitution, adapted to, used and manipulated it. By 'clever tricks' and covert practices they continuously negotiated, resisted and destabilized power.

Even if all the participants spoke of being reterritorialized as 'commodified body, 'appropriate target for violence/undeserving victim' and 'stigmatized identity', their experiences of power, domination and possibility of resistance differed. Throughout the chapter, I have explored how the participants' social locations and personal biographies made them more or less equipped to manage the emotional and physical risk that prostitution entailed. The participants who did not depend on prostitution to get by, who did not have any previous experiences of sexual abuse, who were able to set and maintain boundaries in relation to clients and who did not have to lie about their involvement in prostitution to close friends and family were generally faring better. However, for most of the participants the reterritorialization in the dispositif of prostitution seemed to have had taken a negative form. Lines of flight were cut short by effects of power. The complex network of discourses, power relations and practices that constitute the dispositif of prostitution led to constraints and dependence. For a few of the participants, being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed being reterritorialized in states of domination. Patton (2010, p 66-67) states that when a line of flight fails to connect with the necessary conditions of creative development, or is incapable of so connecting, it may turn into a line of destruction. Some of the participants' lines of flight turned into lines of destruction as the participants rediscovered everything they had attempted to flee (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 38). When tactics to manage emotion, violence or stigma failed, some of the participants followed new lines of flight, attempting to exit prostitution.

## 10. EXITING PROSTITUTION

In this final chapter of the exploration of the participants' story world I will engage with stories about exiting prostitution. The participants were in different stages of their involvement in prostitution at the time of the interviews. While the majority of the participants were still involved in prostitution, nine of them (Elena, Nadia, Therese, Camilla, Yulia, Emma, Betty, Johanna and Lisa) had exited. Emma and Lisa did not narrate exiting prostitution as a significant change in their lives, they both, in different ways, remained involved in the sex industry. However, to the other participants exiting prostitution marked a larger rupture in their life stories. This rupture generated stories of change, flight and movement, stories of becoming other. These stories of change are the subject of this chapter.

In recounting the events of exiting prostitution the participants made sense of their transitions. Just as the beginning stories were responses to me asking the participants to tell me the story of their prostitution experience, so were the 'exiting stories'. These stories may not address the full array of factors that allowed change to take place but they speak of how the participants made sense of their exit. Unlike previous research on exiting prostitution, my intention is not to create a model or typology of factors that support/prevent the exit (Sanders, 2007; Månsson & Hedin, 1999; Baker, Dalla & Williamson, 2010) Instead I take a particular interest in the role of stories in the exiting process.

Apart from the 'exiting stories' (the stories about the events of breaking away from prostitution), the participants' narratives entailed stories about what came after the initial break away. Some of these stories were celebratory of what had been accomplished, while others reflected the difficulties and the anxiety of reimagining yourself and starting a 'new' life after prostitution. The common theme to these stories was that the biographical disruption of exiting

prostitution necessitated a 'restorying' of ones involvement in, and experiences of prostitution. The restorying of one's experiences, will in the chapter be explored not simply as a way to make sense of one's exit from prostitution but as central to the process of change.

The chapter is divided into three sections. While some of the participants conveyed a certainty that they would never re-enter, others had been through processes of exiting and re-entering and were still struggling to transition out of prostitution. Depending on how the participants were reterritorialized, the dispositif of prostitution created different trapping factors, factors that served as barriers to exiting prostitution. A few of the participants who still were involved in prostitution expressed a desire to exit but spoke of how they for different reasons felt 'trapped' in prostitution. I begin the chapter with exploring their stories. After that I move onto exploring Therese's, Nadia's, Betty's, Elena's and Rebecca's exiting stories. In the third and last section I explore the participants' stories about exiting prostitution as a process of restorying their lives. Throughout the chapter I will consider the intersecting structural, social and agentic aspects of exiting prostitution.

### **10.1 Trapping factors**

The Oxford's dictionary definition of exiting is to – "*go out of or leave a place*" As it may sound effortless to go, to leave, exiting prostitution was, for most of the participants who had exited or who expressed a desire to exit, far more complicated than just 'finding the exit' and 'walking out'. As previously discussed, entering into prostitution entailed a reterritorialization in the dispositif of prostitution. Just as life in prostitution was conditioned by the dispositif, so was the exit. The participants' narratives suggested that the dispositif creates 'trapping factors', factors that prevent people from leaving, from following lines of flight (see also Hedin & Månsson, 1998; Sanders, 2007). Depending on how one was reterritorialized, different trapping factors emerged in the participants' narratives. In this section I will explore narratives about trapping factors that were recurrent. While Elena, who had exited prostitution, spoke of previous attempts to exit and the difficulties she had encountered then, Veronika and Sara expressed a desire to exit but found themselves 'trapped' in prostitution.

While the participants made sense of their involvement in prostitution differently, many of them spoke of being in a disadvantaged position when they entered into prostitution. The structural disadvantages that compelled some to enter

into prostitution: poverty, disability, lack of resources, education and other employment options, also served as powerful trapping factors. Veronika first entered into prostitution in order to save her failing business. After an accident in which she fell and injured her back, she could no longer work. Throughout the interviews she spoke of her mostly negative experiences of the health care system and her struggle to get the right diagnosis and treatment. It was not until recently Veronika was granted a sick pension. Before that she supplemented whatever income she had from the social insurance agency or the social services with her earnings from prostitution in order to support herself and her two children. Veronika did not want to rely on a man to provide for herself and her children, in her narrative this was connected to her personal biography, to her experiences of being left to fend for herself after her parents' divorce. She made sense of her involvement in prostitution as a means to economic independence, and as a sacrifice she made for her children.

A client once told me - You're like a... I don't know, there's a province or a family or something that has a coat of arms with a bird eating her own intestines to feed her offspring and he claimed that I was like that bird, eating of myself to feed my children. He thought it was so grand and such a big sacrifice. But you don't think of prostitutes like that, that it could be the matter of a sacrifice, that a person does this, caught between a rock and a hard place.

Veronika made sense of her involvement in prostitution as a sacrifice she made for her children, 'caught between a rock and a hard place'. She was critical of how Swedish society condemns prostitution as inherently exploitative and promotes exiting, while not acknowledging, or maybe rather not resuming full responsibility for, how the structural disadvantages that prompt women like her to enter into prostitution prevail and serve as powerful trapping factors.

Social inequality is the problem, not prostitution in itself! That's what they ought to change, not prostitution as such. (...) Give me a chance to support myself and... Do something about the doctors, the authorities and everyone around me who are really the reason to why I have to prostitute... I'm not the problem, society is! It's like that in all societies, if unemployment increases the number of prostitutes increase. (...) I think they should stop focusing on us prostitutes and start looking to what it is in society that makes people enter into prostitution and then they will find that it's other social problems.

Veronika made sense of her continued involvement in prostitution as a result of social inequality. The same intersection of various kinds of disadvantage that made Veronika enter into prostitution was made sense of as the trapping factor that prevented her from exiting. Veronika's narrative speaks of the intersection of the dispositif of prostitution with dispositifs of social inequality.

Socio-economic need was spoken of as a trapping factor in more than one way. While Veronika made sense of her involvement in prostitution as a sacrifice, a way to provide for her children, other participants spoke of the 'quick money' they made in prostitution, not as a 'means of survival' but as allowing for a certain lifestyle. Sara entered into prostitution when she was in her early twenties. She owed money and had to find a way to pay off her debts. She decided to post an ad at a sex contact forum and met her first client shortly after. In her narrative she made sense of the quick money she made both as an incentive to stay in prostitution and as a trapping factor preventing her from exiting.

Wow, it's that easy to make money? I had no idea! Nobody has to know. It doesn't have to change anything. You know, in half an hour I could have money at any time. It's a little bit like, no matter if you're selling sex or dope it's the quick money that becomes the drug. That's what you become addicted to. That's why it's so hard to quit.

Sara spoke of how, even though her initial intention was to make some 'quick money', pay off her debts and then exit prostitution, she soon got used to the new lifestyle the money she made enabled her to have.

S – I got more and more into this routine of spending what I earned... because there is... no matter how much money you're earning, and in comparison it's not that much money, there is always something to spend it on. You discover new things all the time and then there were more and more new habits, bad habits. For example trips... well the trips I kind of feel were alright to spend money on but all the other trash. I don't even know what... I bought a lot of clothes and shoes and really expensive make up, really expensive shampoos and all kinds of expensive beauty products and interior design details. I've been eating out every day, and stuff like that. (shaking her head)

A – You're shaking your head while talking about it... you're not happy with it?

S – No I'm not... You could put it this way - I personally, don't have anything against the way I make money but I don't approve of what I spend my money

on and the way I spend it... that's something I would like to change

A – Yes. Do you feel like it's hard to change it? Have you tried to change it?

S – It is hard, I've tried but I drift back.

Sara's narrative speaks of the intersection of the dispositif of prostitution with the dispositif of consumer capitalism. In consumer capitalism, consumption has become an important marker of identity. Jessica Ringrose and Valerie Walkerdine (2008) argue that, in consumer culture, professional identity or class background no longer are the primary markers of identity, identities are rather created through the purchase of goods and services and the creation of a certain lifestyle. In consumer culture people 'consume themselves into being' in a life of constant and continuous improvement and change (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 230). Sara made sense of her continued involvement in prostitution as a response to being made to feel that "*what you own*" and "*how you live*" was what mattered.

S – It's almost like you're made to think and feel like that's what counts kind of...

A – Yes.

S – What you own and how you live...

A – And today, what you've invested in clothes, products and interior design has that changed how you feel about yourself, or how you think of yourself, or how you think others think of you?

S – It's a difficult question... I don't know... at the same time as it is really satisfactory to spend money and have things... I think a lot about superficial things and it bothers me... like, which mascara is the best one, or which hair conditioner to buy. There are so many other more stimulating things to think about...

A – How come you think it's like that?

S – I guess I just got used to it... and I don't have that much else... I make money and spend money so that's what occupies my thoughts...

Despite her relatively disadvantaged socio-economic position, being young and without any higher education, Sara's involvement in prostitution enabled her to 'consume herself into being'. Ringrose and Walkerdine speak of neo-liberalism as an intensification of the feminine as both a subject and an object of commodification and consumption. Women's increased material independence and the intersection of the neo-liberal imperative to continuously improve the self, and self-governing practices of performing 'appropriate femininity' have

women consume products in order to shape their bodies into objects of desirable femininity (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). In prostitution Sara became both a subject and an object of consumption as she had to be desirable, presentable, and consumable in order to own the means to consume. Sara thus perceived herself as trapped in a cycle of making money and spending money. Her identity was largely produced through consumption. She spoke of herself as “*caught up*” and stated that it was hard for her “*to think ahead*”. Her mind was occupied by thoughts on what to consume. She had a hard time imagining a different life even though she wanted to, she spoke of consumption as a trapping factor.

Veronika’s and Sara’s narratives convey the intersection of the dispositif of prostitution with dispositifs of social inequality and the dispositif of consumer capitalism. Structural disadvantages as well as getting used to a certain lifestyle were recurrent themes in the participants’ narratives about trapping factors. Another trapping factor that recurred in the narratives was the sense of permanently being placed outside of society.

In the previous chapter I explored the different tactics the participants employed in managing stigma. Some participants spoke of the how being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed the prostitute sign sticking to their bodies impinging on their identities. When I met Elena she had exited from prostitution a few years earlier. This exit had however been preceded by several failed attempts. Elena spoke of earlier attempts to exit as ‘moves toward normality’, a normality that Elena however did not feel she belonged to:

So I went home to Sweden and I started studying at this adult learning center (...) I’ve had quite a few periods when I’ve kind of moved towards normality. When you do things that other people want you to do to sort out your life. I think I even got off drugs during this time. (...) Then I started working. I went to school for two semesters and then I got a job at this telemarketing company. I think everybody in my home town has worked there at some point. It wasn’t exactly unique that I got a job there but I was struck by this performance anxiety... It didn’t work out. I worked there for about two months and then I posted another ad and then there weren’t many days before I quit that job. (...) I felt so lost in ordinary life. I was so scared to make it and it feels like as long as you can’t talk about your life you’re living a lie. You don’t have to talk about prostitution all the time, I don’t with my friends, but to know that there such a big thing that you can’t talk about. I mean I can’t talk about Copenhagen because then people will ask - What did you do there for a year? God, yes... It

wasn't just that but I felt like I longed for it and I don't know if I will ever be able to explain that really. It's like a mix between a destructive force and, like I said, you belong there, it's your world.

Attempting to exit prostitution, or as Elena phrased it to 'move towards normality', she went back to school and later started to work. However, her previous experiences and attachments made her feel out of place, "*lost in ordinary life*". Elena had been involved in prostitution on and off since she was fourteen. Prostitution was 'her world'. The stigmatization and marginalization that prostitution entailed served as a powerful trapping factor.

### Concluding remarks

The participants spoke of many of the trapping factors identified in previous research such as: poverty, lack of other employment options, small social networks, isolation, emotional and identity anxieties regarding exiting, destructive relationships and low self-esteem (Hedin & Månsson, 1998, p. 160; Sanders, 2007, p. 75-76). The participants' narratives relay how the dispositif of prostitution intersect with dispositifs of social inequality and the dispositif of consumer capitalism in creating trapping factors. They also speak of the intersecting structural, social and agentic factors of exiting prostitution, the trapping factors that the dispositif produced were both material barriers and identity related barriers.

Women's right to assistance to 'escape' prostitution is central to Swedish prostitution policy. Veronika's urge for society to address social inequality in order to prevent prostitution, echoes the 1970s prostitution commission's framing of prostitution as a social policy issue. As prostitution was reframed as a criminal justice issue in Swedish prostitution policy discourse, the responsibility for prostitution was reconfigured from primarily belonging to society to primarily belonging to clients. Prostitution should be eradicated by the criminalization of clients combined with welfarist responses designed to prevent women from entering into prostitution and aid them in exiting. Instead of increasing economic resources to target structural and social inequalities the criminal justice framework generate responses centered on individual intervention obscuring society's failure to tackle the social inequality and exclusion that are important factors to why many enter into prostitution. This is problematic. However as Sara's and Elena's narratives relay understanding barriers to exiting prostitution, also requires understanding why some women might not be inclined/able to exit even though they are provided with assistance. Research shows that despite

that women engage in exiting programs providing resources to remove material barriers to exiting many women still re-enter prostitution (Dalla, 2006; Davies, 2000). Sara's and Elena's narratives spoke of that even if there is a desire to exit prostitution and the material possibilities are there, the desire for a certain lifestyle or a sense of not belonging in 'the ordinary world' could still serve as powerful trapping factors.

Despite the numerous trapping factors the dispositif of prostitution create people obviously exit prostitution. In the following section I will engage with five of the participants' exiting stories in order to explore how these participants made sense of their transition out of prostitution.

## 10.2 Exiting stories

The participants' exiting stories were vastly different. While some made sense of their exit as a result of a particular event, others made sense of it as a gradual process. Some stories were brief, others long, some stretched over a couple of days, others over a couple of years. There is relatively little research done on how and why women exit prostitution. As Sanders concludes, "*What we know about how women leave the sex industry is patchy, largely based on the street market, and rarely the main focus of research*" (Sanders, 2007, p. 75). Despite Swedish prostitution policy's overt focus on exiting, it was not until 1998 that how and why women leave prostitution became a main focus of Swedish prostitution research. Ulla-Carin Hedin's and Sven-Axel Månsson's study, *The way out! – on women leaving prostitution*, was published in 1998. Drawing on life history interviews with twenty three women mainly involved in outdoor prostitution, the authors conclude that exiting prostitution should not be understood as an event but rather as a process taking place over time (Månsson & Hedin, 1999, p. 69). They argue that the break away from prostitution could either happen suddenly or gradually depending on how 'ensnared' the person is in prostitution. While some women made sense of their break away as the result of a reaction to a significant, either negative or positive life event, others made sense of exiting as a gradual process taking place over a period of time, in which the person limited the range of sexual services, reduced presence and exposure in prostitution, or decreased the number of clients (Månsson & Hedin, 1999, p. 71).

While the authors conclude that there are structural, relational, and individual factors that either prevent or facilitate a persons' exit from prostitution, they particularly stress the importance of the woman's own individual coping

strategies. They argue that “*the individual’s emotional commitment (...) lies at the very heart of the process of change*” (Månsson & Hedin, 1999, p. 71).

In Sanders (2007) study, *Becoming an Ex-Sex Worker – Making Transitions Out of a Deviant Career*, she interviewed fifteen women with experience of indoor prostitution and fifteen women with experience of outdoor prostitution, with the purpose of creating a ‘typology of transitions out of prostitution’. Sanders identify four processes of change women undertake in order to exit prostitution: *reactionary, gradual planning, natural progression, and yo-yoing*. While some of Sanders findings correspond with Månsson’s and Hedin’s study, she is critical of the importance they placed on the ‘emotional commitment’ of individual women as a determinant of whether exit from prostitution is or is not achieved. Sanders questions this claim and argues that structural, political, cultural, and legal factors, rather than emotional commitment, are key determinants in hindering women from exiting prostitution (Sanders, 2007, p. 74). The role of structural versus agentic factors in exiting prostitution is a recurring theme in previous research (Cimino, 2012; Oselin, 2010). Both Hedin’s and Månsson’s ‘exit model’ and Sanders’ ‘typology of transitions out of prostitution’ entail structural as well as agentic aspects of exiting prostitution. In engaging with Therese’s, Nadia’s, Eva’s, Elena’s and Yulia’s exiting stories, I will illustrate the complexity of interwoven factors that may facilitate or prevent exiting, and how the structural and agentic aspects of exiting prostitution intersect.

### Therese’s story

Being negatively reterritorialized within the dispositif of prostitution did for some of the participants entail an entanglement in relations of power and domination, and a gradual deterioration of their ability to protect themselves from physical and emotional harm. As you might remember, as Therese’s tactics to manage emotion, violence and stigma failed, she became more and more entangled in relations of power and domination. In her narrative she stated that even though she wanted to exit prostitution, she did not have the strength to do it on her own.

I was broken down. I didn’t have the strength to fight anymore. In the end I had sex for a bag of food and one hundred crowns. I had no resilience, I was...I was doing really bad. In the end I walked around like a zombie. I really wanted to get out. I saw other people and I thought to myself - Everyone else is happy and normal, how did this happen to me? And then if you don’t eat you can hardly think either.

Therese made sense of her exit from prostitution as the result of an intervention. As her resilience receded and her body became weaker, people around her started to take notice.

T – I remember that I did things more and more slowly, everyday it got harder and harder to move. Then I fell apart at a martial art training session. I went there with a friend, she said I needed some sort of activity. I guess she had an idea of what was going on but she didn't know any details. She is one of the two people I've told (about the prostitution) but she just knows that it has happened somehow, not whether it was in a club or in my apartment or in dirty back seats. But she brought me with her and that's when... We were working out. Unfortunately I couldn't do it, (laughs) I fainted, I was in too bad condition.

A – Right

T – It still felt good to get out a little, to do something else and to box a little and warm up and stuff like that. There was a guy there who she knew, he had talked to her behind my back so to speak, not in a mean way though. He had said that it seemed like I was doing really bad. He had told his mom, she was some sort of social worker, that – I met this girl at the training session today and she seemed to be in very bad condition... is that how it's supposed to be? And he had told her what he had seen and then she contacted me.

A – Mhm...

T – And I don't know how she did it but she got a contact for me at the Prostitution Unit and she arranged things with the Social Insurance Agency and she helped me to see a doctor. I remember I was like a zombie, I just followed her around. I was still wearing hoodies and sunglasses and was hiding so much I almost walked into the walls of houses.

Therese made sense of her exit from prostitution as a result of the intervention of others. She was emotionally and physically exhausted and was unable to change her situation. Even though she wanted to get out, she was not capable on her own. Therese's story is a story lacking in agency, the trapping factors of prostitution had Therese 'zombified', depending on others to act on her behalf.

### Nadia's story

Nadia had followed a line of flight from prostitution before. She moved from her home town in an attempt to escape her past and start a new life. After she met Farrah she re-entered prostitution and became deeply entangled in relations of power and domination. Nadia's exiting story spun over a couple of days and

began during one particular night. Nadia had already had quite a few clients that night and had begun to find it harder and harder to shut down. After fudging with Farrah, she agreed to go with one last client. As they were approaching the client's neighborhood, Nadia realized she had been there before.

I realized it was familiar to me, I had been there before. When I was a kid my aunt and uncle used to live there and during the summers I used to visit them and stay there. I knew they didn't live there anymore, but they used to and it was... When I saw the townhouses ... he lived in a townhouse, I was like – Shit, this could have been a neighboring house to theirs! It was very... It felt so weird and then the pain that comes with the realization that – Oh my god, anyone could be a john! It could be your grandpa, it could be your old class mate, your friend, it could be your boyfriend, it could be anyone, and that realization just hit me so hard - Oh my god, the way I see people, it's killing me! (crying) It's killing me to look at people in this way. I felt dead inside...

Coming back to a place Nadia had visited before, at a different time in her life, led to a realization. Realizing that anyone could be 'a john', or realizing that she saw people that way, was unbearable to her. The day after, she found herself aimlessly walking around in the city.

I was walking around by myself (...) I started to loose... It's pretty easy for me to dissociate, it's something I've done to deal with the johns and it was a little bit like I lost sense of where I was. I walked straight out in traffic and vroom there was a car, and I didn't care. I was apathic. I was just staring in front of me and walking straight ahead. I walked into a store and bought a bra because I had the money and I could. I didn't even try it on, I just bought it. That's what I did. I didn't know where to go and all of a sudden I was on the train going to my uncle's gym where I used to work extra at times, I still do. I have dance students... I borrowed his dance hall, I just wanted to dance all the crap away and I couldn't, I couldn't! I'm all alone in this big hall with all the mirrors and I sit there and I see myself. I look into my eyes and I don't know who I am and then I take my hand and grab a pen and paper, it's like my hand is writing on its own, it's like I'm writing to myself and I'm writing a song... (...) I wrote and it was such a weird feeling to write it. I felt like I wasn't in touch with myself, but somehow I was. It was my hand that was writing... it was my subconscious that was writing. There was something I had to tell myself - that I had to leave. I didn't know who would help me... I didn't know how to do it, I just knew that I couldn't do it anymore.

Nadia's story, similarly to Therese's, is a story about 'losing oneself' in prostitution. Nadia's involvement in prostitution entailed a perpetual conflict between her feelings and her actions, a conflict that created emotive dissonance. Nadia managed her emotions by shutting down. Sitting in front of the mirrors in her uncle's dancehall, she spoke of how she experienced a sense of self estrangement, "*I see myself. I look into my eyes and I don't know who I am*". She spoke of it as if, in this moment, a part of her that was shut down, that had fallen into silence, communicated with her. She wrote to herself, something she knew but still did not know - she had to leave. In Nadia's narrative this moment marks a point of no return "*I didn't know who would help me... I didn't know how to do it. I just knew that I couldn't do it anymore.*" Not knowing who would help her, Nadia remembered a friend who had told her that if she ever wanted to talk about anything she would be there for her.

N – I guess I had those words in the back of my mind so it was her number I dialed... And I didn't know what to say to her, I don't remember exactly. I have written about this too, but right now I'm blank, it's almost like I'm there in that moment, in that feeling, I went blank on the phone.

A – Mm...

N – Yes, but she... at least we decided we should meet up the day after and she said – Nadia, I want you to come to my place and I want you to tell me like it is. Tell me like it is. I'm not quoting our conversation word for word but that was the essence of what she said. I guess she realized that something was wrong. She probably heard it in my voice or... I don't know I might even have said that I needed help. I made another call that night. (...) One of the guys in the band had realized what I was doing and maybe it wasn't that strange because I had hinted I couldn't rehearse early in the day because I was working night... When he asked me what I was working with I couldn't give him a straight answer. I just told him it was off the books. I guess he thought it sounded weird and I don't know how or why, but all of a sudden he asked – Do you need help? Is there anything you need help with? Then I felt – No, I don't need any help. I help others but no one can help me, this is my shit that I've chosen so who can help me? I could take care of things, I could help people with money by selling myself or whatever. But that night I had already taken a step by talking to my other friend and I had... and then I called him, I knew he had a driver's license... and so he answered and I told him a lot and he was probably the first or well the only person that told me – Don't do it again, don't do it again! He told me – Don't work tomorrow! And it was like I needed someone else to tell me. (...) I can see this pattern, when someone else tells me... I've cried

for help and I haven't gotten any. It's rather been that people who promised to help me have made it even worse for me, like Farrah and others... and that's what I feel such sorrow over, that when I actually have met people who've said – Nadia, this isn't good for you, or – Don't do it, and it's been genuine. I mean they haven't told me in a condescending manner, like – Little Nadia! But they've said it because they are worried about me and want to help *me*. Not with a patronizing attitude. It's sad, because then I've listened. So that fucking obstinate that people claim that I am, that I've just done whatever, it's not true. I really needed the help I didn't get. (...) What happened next was... I exited prostitution. But I've sold myself at times, it has happened. The last time it happened was a year ago. I was in a situation in which I really needed the money. I was so indebted and people were calling and harassing me and I was sad and disappointed and it felt like an option then. But now... I struggle not to do it... and to at least not do it with any regularity. But it's difficult, it's a struggle and that's where my story ends, or I guess it never really ends.

Nadia made sense of her exit from prostitution as the result of a long process of becoming more and more entangled in relations of power and domination, a process that took her to the verge of a break down. Nadia's exiting story involved a realization and reaching a point of no return, it also addressed the relational aspect of exiting prostitution. Even though Nadia stated that she did not know who would help her, she had people who cared about her who she could call that night. Nadia spoke of exiting as a process, not an event, even though she had exited prostitution she still struggled with thoughts of reentering, to her, exiting was an ongoing process.

### Betty's story

Betty's story, similarly to Nadia's, entailed a sudden exit, but unlike Nadia, Betty did not make sense of her exit as primarily driven by a realization or by reaching a point of no return. Betty was incarcerated, that's how she first broke away from both the drugs and the prostitution. When I asked Betty how come she chose to exit and what that process was like she said:

B – There was no process. I didn't have a choice. I was locked up. It saved me, that much I can say. It was in September, I was locked up in September. I actually turned myself in. I had a sentence. That spring I still thought – How the fuck can you be that stupid, to stop being a criminal, doing drugs and selling sex, when you can get both dick, money and dope? Do you know what I mean?

A – Mhm.

B – That’s the way I thought, it’s absurd and it’s twisted, but that’s the way I was back then. My thoughts didn’t go any further and my sense of self-worth was... I had no self insight... nothing was present at all...

A – Mm... and then you ended up in prison and what was that like, then all of that was gone?

B – Yes, I had prepared myself mentally somehow... I cleaned up the apartment, I thought I would come back there. (...) I packed my bags and packed tooth paste and this and that and I went there and turned myself in – I will do my time now. It wasn’t that long, it was... I was there for six weeks.

A – Right.

B – It took me about... my drug addiction was... my drug of choice was amphetamine and it took me about four weeks until I was able to wake up and be somewhat alert the whole day. Then I started to prepare to get out. During this time I had lost my apartment, the social services didn’t pay for it, so I was homeless and had nothing to come home to. I was offered an apartment in a shelter for drug addicted women and I was like - No please, no women, and addicts, no! So I had some money in my pocket to pay for a hostel and then I know this woman, Sofia, who has an open day center for addicts and I called her, because the priest there at the prison was like – Give Sofia a call, maybe she can help you with housing, and so I did and she was like – Yes, well don’t you want to stay clean though? And then I started to think about it... Before, in prison, I hung out with women who had quite long sentences and we were going to get out around the same time. We started to challenge each other – What are we going to do when we get out? Are we going to sit on a park bench, toothless, and hairless almost you know... So I had started to think about it and then Sofia who worked at this day center said - Don’t you want to quit? And I was like – I guess I’ll try. That was my response... then she got me a place to stay through the outpatient treatment, that’s how it happened.

A – But do you think that there... was it there somewhere in the back of your mind already before you had decided to do the time or was it a result of these six weeks, that you chose to try to quit?

B – Yes, it was prison... to get off the street. I didn’t have any thoughts on it before... I couldn’t even imagine how you could be that stupid.

A – Right...

Betty made sense of her exit from prostitution as dependent on her getting “*off the street*”. In prison, Betty spoke of finding a space in which she, together with

others, began to imagine a different life. Betty's story clearly addresses how structural and agentic aspects interconnect in the exiting process. Betty had started to imagine a different life, at this critical time she was offered housing and treatment.

### Elena's story

While Therese, Nadia and Betty made sense of their exit as initiated by a sudden event or a realization, other participants spoke of a more gradual and premeditated exit. Elena narrated how she phased out her prostitution activity over time.

A – Maybe this is a stupid question but what was it that made you want to quit... you mentioned before that you felt like you were done with it...

E – Yes, that was part of it.

A – And how did you feel about prostitution then?

E – It was a bit like with the drugs... it was something that held me back... and since I... I'm still a little ashamed of that... that until quite recently I claimed it was my job. I equated it with other nine to five jobs, I woke up at nine and... I mean, I worked nine to five but... When I decided to exit I also got some support from the Prostitution Unit. That's when I was like - Now I really have to show that I'm not going to do it anymore. I still had my regular clients but I stopped getting new ones and when I stopped getting new ones it started to take longer and longer in between seeing clients and then it was easier to turn off the phone for longer and longer periods... So it started with me making up my mind and then not posting any new ads, and then when not working turning off the phone, and all of a sudden the phone had been shut off for four days, and then it turned into a month, and then I got pregnant and that's also part of it... (...)

A – Was it conflictual, were you ambivalent whether to exit or not, or where you certain that's what you wanted?

E – It was what I had to do to move ahead, to have a career, to start to make real money.

As opposed to Therese and Nadia, Elena did not make sense of her exit from prostitution as the end of a downward spiral where she finally had reached the point of emotional and physical exhaustion, she actually spoke of experiencing more control by the end of her involvement in prostitution than in the beginning.

In one way the last period was the best period. It was kind of like with the drugs. By the end when I had decided that I wasn't going to do it anymore then I had done it all. I hadn't done all drugs but you know when it came to my drug of choice I had. You know, I had partied, it had not all been miserable. I had not only been in stale basements doing drugs off the floor. I had done drugs in parties, pre parties, after parties, in restrooms, on mirrors. I had done it with a thousand crown bill, a hundred crown bill and a fifty, you know. I had partied with quite a lot of good people and some bad people, there wasn't much left that I hadn't done and it was pretty good then, and I was like – It's time to stop. (...) I felt like I was done with it. And that's kind of how I felt with prostitution as well - It's only an income now, you have become real good at screening clients, hardly anyone slip through who you even have to have a discussion with. Then maybe it's time to start to work on yourself. I had started before, I had started with my self-therapy that I think is highly underestimated. Most people smile and say – So what, you sit around and talk to yourself? Yes, you ask yourself the questions that others don't dare to ask you like – Why do you do this? You force yourself to think about things you really don't want to think about. I have done it ever since... I was going to all these different therapists and psychologists, not too many psychologists, mostly therapists... which was good, but often I put too much responsibility on them and didn't do the work myself, which led to there being very little change. Because you can't change during the forty five minutes you have together, you have to change on your own as well. So I guess I asked myself some really tough questions.

Elena made sense of her exit as a rational choice, something she had to do in order to move her life in the right direction. She mentioned several factors that were important in her exiting process, social support in the form of her contact at the Prostitution Unit and a positive life event in the form of her becoming pregnant, but maybe first and foremost the importance of self-reflection. By confronting herself, asking herself difficult questions, "*questions that others don't dare to ask*", Elena began to explore what prostitution was about to her.

### Yulia's story

Yulia, similarly to Elena, phased out her involvement in prostitution. Her exiting process was initiated by her finally, after several denied applications, receiving permanent residency in Sweden. Yulia's uncertain legal status had served as a trapping factor preventing her from exiting prostitution.

They denied my application for residency on the grounds that they didn't think I would behave appropriately... it was really unfair of them and I felt very, very bitter. I was studying at the University, I had been in Sweden for four years by then, so I could have been a citizen but I didn't even have the right to student loans. I was very bitter and angry at Sweden. I jumped the turnstile in the metro because I wanted them to know that they owed me... and these Swedish guys who paid me, it was almost like I was taking from Sweden what they owed me. (...) But when I got my permanent residence permit everything changed. I was going to the UK to study and that's when I got rid of my old phone number, my old sim card. When I got the residence permit I thought to myself - I don't need this anymore. I can make it on my own now. I got rid of the number and transferred my four regulars to my private number. (...) I didn't feel as bitter after I got the residence permit. I didn't need the revenge.

Yulia took her first step towards exiting prostitution after she received permanent residency in Sweden. She made sense of this as both a result of a new found sense of security, "*I don't need this anymore. I can make it on my own now*", and her feelings of bitterness and need for revenge subsiding. As a first step in her exiting process, Yulia got rid of her old phone number, but kept four of her regular clients. She spoke of how she still needed the money she made in prostitution to get by, moreover seeing her regulars was not as hard because of the relationship she had established with them. The thought of seeing new clients had however become unbearable.

The four guys... we kind of became friends... it was three thousand five hundred extra every month, sometimes a week. It wasn't bad at that time, when I didn't take it as seriously... But these new guys were digging away at my soul and you didn't know who they were and there are quite a few idiots out there. When you're studying, and you'll soon have your MBA, you don't want people digging away on you. These other guys, I knew what to expect from them. I knew they were okay. There was some dirty talk but it was on my terms. I was in charge. I was hot and sexy and I knew they wouldn't be able to find anyone better. I knew I could rule, I could tell them what I wanted. If I didn't want to do it, it didn't matter how much they paid, I still wouldn't do it. But I didn't want anyone unacquainted, where it could turn into being on their terms. It was definitely a calculated act. I knew I didn't want to continue doing it. Slowly but surely I had started to get out of it, but during that time it was hard because I didn't have that much money...

When I asked Yulia how come she thought seeing new clients had started to feel like ‘a digging away on her soul’ she said:

Y – I had started to find myself and then I didn’t have to play this role anymore. It’s not until now I actually think about it... That was a great question... So I think it was about me finding myself and then not having to play anyone else and ehm... these [four] guys, they knew me and respected me the way I was, so I didn’t have to act or well, I had to act a little bit but not as much as I would have to with new clients.

A – Right.

Y – It was nice to at least in some ways be able to be myself.

A – Right, and to have to play a role, was it that feeling that was digging away on your soul?

Y – Yes, I mean, they knew who I was and I didn’t have to overwork myself but if I was to see new [clients], then it would have been the same act all over again, on the same level it had always been, and that was out of the question. (...)But it was a long journey, from I was sixteen until... The last time I met a client was in 2008, so it was sixteen years. It’s my whole coming of age, from childhood through my teens and yes... so that’s the journey I’ve undertaken...

Yulia eventually stopped seeing her last four clients and thereby exited prostitution indefinitely. Her narrative spoke of how different factors intersected in the exiting process. When Yulia received permanent residency she could begin to imagine a different life, she did not have to depend on prostitution any more. She was soon to graduate from her master’s program and had the legal right to remain in Sweden. In imagining her career as an economist, she surpassed the material conditions of her confinement and was empowered to struggle for a different life. This was when the emotional labor of prostitution became unbearable. “*When you’re studying, and you’ll soon have your MBA you don’t want people digging away on you.*” When a different future became attainable for Yulia, prostitution became unbearable.

### Concluding remarks

Therese, Nadia, Betty, Elena and Yulia all made sense of exiting prostitution as a significant change in their lives. Their exiting stories were stories about change. These stories, rather than encompassing the full array of factors that allowed change to take place, spoke of how the participants made sense of their exit.

All of the exiting stories, except from Therese's, involved an event or a time that led to a shift in the perception of one's sense of self or one's involvement in prostitution. Nadia coming back to a place she had visited before at a different time, as a different self, made her realize how prostitution had affected her. She spoke of how she, in front of the mirror in the dancehall, was confronted by a part of her that had fallen into silence. For Betty, being incarcerated, getting off the street and off the drugs, opened up a space in which she could begin to reimagine herself and her future. Elena had reached a point where prostitution was 'mere income', where she could begin to ask herself the 'difficult questions' she had avoided for so long, where she could begin to explore 'what prostitution was to her'. Lastly, when Yulia received her permanent residency it gave her the sense of security she needed, she did not have to play a role anymore, she could find out 'who she was'.

The participants' stories all speak of the intrinsically interconnected structural, relational and agentic factors of exiting prostitution. No matter if the exit from prostitution was made sense of as reactionary, initiated by an event or a realization, or as gradual, a premeditated decision that led to a phasing out process, it was dependent on that there were other opportunities available for the participants. However, what made the participants open to these opportunities seemed to be a change in perception of one's sense of self or one's involvement in prostitution. For example Betty, who stated that the offer of housing and treatment would have made little sense to her before she had started to imagine a different life. She had no intention of exiting prostitution, drugs, or criminality before she was incarcerated. Or Nadia, who long before she was confronted with herself in the dancehall, had the numbers to the friends she decided to call that night.

In their study of gender, crime and desistance, Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph (2002) shift the focus from determining factors or predictors for change, and stress the importance of cognitive change. Instead of speaking of 'turning points' or 'change agents', they speak of 'hooks for change', with the purpose of emphasizing the agency in how subjects creatively and selectively make use of opportunities, as well as endow certain events or opportunities with meaning. Hooks for change are thus elements in the environment that subjects make use of as catalysts for change. Hooks for change in the participants exiting stories are factors in the social environment, such as: being granted a residence permit, getting a place to stay, having a friend saying 'don't do it', receiving a sick pension or being enrolled in a treatment program. These factors all supported the

process of change. Giordano et al. argue that in order for change to take place, openness to change is necessary. In the participants' narratives, this openness was intrinsically connected to a change in perception of one's sense of self or one's involvement in prostitution. Both the exposure to a hook and one's attitude towards it, were important elements in the participants' exiting stories. What allowed change primarily involved either the hook's perceived availability or its meaning or importance to the individual.

Exiting was, for most of the participants, made sense of as a process. As Nadia stated: "*that's where my story ends, or I guess it never really ends*". The participants' exiting stories recounted events that marked points in their processes of exiting. These events served as reference points that were highlighted in the newly created story of their experiences. These events aided not only in leaving prostitution but in the creation of a new narrative. In the participants' narratives, the process of exiting emerged as a process of restorying experiences and reimagining selves.

### **10.3 Exiting prostitution - restorying lives**

As stated in Chapter Seven, life stories are subject to constant revision. Exiting prostitution did for most of the participants mark a biographical disruption that necessitated the restorying of one's involvement in, and experiences of, prostitution. The theme of restorying one's life was common to the narratives about exiting. Restorying one's experiences is in this thesis not simply treated as a way to make sense of one's exit from prostitution. Brown and Augusta-Scott (2006, p. xix) state that "*the stories we tell are the stories we live. When we write new stories of our lives, we live new stories.*" I understand the process of restorying one's experiences as central to the process of change.

Exiting, as a biographical disruption, required not only that the participants restoried their prostitution experience, but also that they reimagined themselves, their pasts and their futures. Just as stories are entities open to constant becomings, so are selves (Tamboukou, 2008b). The deterritorialization that exiting prostitution entailed opened up for an exploration of possibilities of other ways of being, of becoming other. The notion of becoming is in Deleuze's philosophy a notion of processes of change, flight, or movement. Deleuze proposed a self which can be conceived as a 'plane of constant becoming' (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2006). Patton (2000, p. 85) argues that, even though the possibility of becoming other is present in every moment, it is realized in those moments when "*a qualitatively different kind of transition is involved*". Patton further argues

that the most important shifts are those “*almost imperceptible cracks which affects a person’s concept of self*” (Patton, 2000, p. 86). As stated in the previous section, the participants exiting stories all entailed a change in perception of one’s sense of self or one’s involvement in prostitution. These stories recounted events of becoming other. Just as entering into prostitution, by some, was made sense of as an effect of a desire to become other, the shifts or changes of these stories marked new becomings. The notion of becoming other is a central tool to the analysis of the participants’ narratives about restorying themselves. In analyzing these narratives I also make use of the way poststructuralist theory has been appropriated and employed in narrative therapy.

Narrative therapy is grounded in post-structuralist theory on knowledge, power and the self (Madigan, 2011). Critical of the modernist notion of the core self, narrative therapists argue that we are ‘storied into being’, meaning that our self is constituted through social relationships and is the outcome of stories that others tell of us and that we tell of ourselves. Narrative therapy is thus concerned with how power operates throughout people’s stories of self within culture. Within narrative therapy, the self is considered not as fixed or single storied, but as multi-storied, fluid and always in the process of becoming (Walther & Carey, 2009). In narrative therapy, the process of restorying ourselves is the process of challenging the restraints of finalized accounts of who/what we are by creating alternative stories. It’s within this restorying process that change is believed to take place.

One of the main challenges the participants faced after breaking away from prostitution was to free themselves from restraining narratives of who they had been, were and therefore could become. An understanding of narratives as both technologies of the self and technologies of power stipulates that although subjects live and construct stories about themselves, these stories also live and construct subjects. To be reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed to be reterritorialized as a stigmatized identity, and the ever present risk of the prostitute sign sticking to one’s body. Even though the participants resisted the meanings ascribed to their bodies, their identities and lives often became entangled with dominant narratives about who they were as ‘prostitutes’ and thereby with others finalized accounts of who they had been, were and might become. Stephen Madigan (2011, p. 30) argues that the stories we tell about ourselves are performed, they live through us and have the ability to both restrain and free us. For the participants who had internalized ideas about who they were

as ‘prostitutes’, ‘whores’ or ‘sexual beings for others’, exiting prostitution was not only about breaking away from prostitution but also about separating and freeing themselves from these ideas.

The following extract from Betty’s narrative is illustrative of the process of separating oneself from restraining ideas of who we were, are and may become. The day before Betty and I met for our second interview, she had walked past the prostitution district for the first time since she exited prostitution. Being in that space reminded her of ‘what she used to be’.

B – Yesterday I went to that area (the prostitution district), there is a church there and there was a meeting, an NA meeting. So I get off the bus and I walk up towards... towards what used to be my workplace and... (exhales) it hit me, you know. I haven’t been in that area and been present in my thoughts, I mean in the recovery. So it hit me, every corner, wherever I looked I had been. And I saw men and I saw... I had a fleeting thought: What if someone stops and offers me 2000 crowns for sex, what do I do then? Do you know what I mean?

A – Mm...

B – I’m low on cash right now... but it was a fleeting... the thought was there but it was fleeting and the... this solution focus that I have... - How do I feel afterwards? and bla, bla, bla... it saved me.

A – Right.

B – But the feeling was really strong and I felt it in the meeting, I clenched my fists and you know I was in the right place, in a meeting, and I thought to myself... It was the first time I was in that meeting, in that particular church and I thought to myself - Do I come here and share this pain, these thoughts, the first thing I do? This reminder of who I’ve been... no I won’t! But then I thought to myself – Yes I will! I’ll do it now – Hi, my name is... And it really stirred me, I was so vulnerable. I allowed myself to be sad over the way things were, but then I... one of these insights that are a part of me now told me – Yes, that’s how it used to be, but it doesn’t have to be like that now.

A – Right.

B – And it *isn’t* like that now, but I really had to practice it, I really had to remind myself that it *isn’t* like that now, because the feeling was really strong and I was moved by it somehow...

In Betty’s narrative, entering into the space in which she used to perform ‘the prostitute’ turned into re-entering the stigmatized identity. Being confronted with her past and *who she used to be* evoked a lot of emotion. Betty had to remind

herself that “*what has been, does not have to be*”. Freeing herself from restraining stories of who she had been and therefore could become was an ongoing process, despite the fact that over two years had passed since Betty broke away from prostitution.

As mentioned before, to many of the participants, exiting prostitution marked a larger rupture in their life stories. Even though separating themselves from stigmatizing ideas about who they were as ‘prostitutes’ was central to restorying their lives and their experiences, there were other narratives about who they were and who they could become that were equally restraining. Betty who had many years of drug addiction behind her spoke of previous attempts to change her life that, rather than entailing a line of flight, had entailed an adjustment to normative cultural prescriptions of how she as a ‘woman’ and ‘mother’ should live and behave.

B – I was clean for fourteen years, but never in touch with my emotions, I was codependent, I took care of everything, I took care of everybody around me but I couldn’t take care of myself because I didn’t know how...

A – Right...

B – I didn’t know, I had no idea, I was living in the way I thought society expected me to, the house should be cleaned on Fridays, there can be no dust, if there is they will come and take the kids away... (...) It turned into chaos, I relapsed and my relapse lasted for twelve years, so you get the picture. But then there were never any money, I struggled, I had four kids you know and we had a Volvo. We lived in a little town and there were parties with the neighbors. It was fucking sick, a little place in the middle of nowhere with a community center and everything you know.

A – (laughs)

B – And the way the conversations went... You know me and my girlfriends we ordered stuff from Halléns and Ellos catalogues for our kids and sat and made grocery shopping lists and went on weekly shopping tours and... It’s an experience I have but I would never want to live like that again, so boxed in and so limited emotionally and intellectually. There are other ways to live and that’s what I have discovered, there are other ways, you don’t have to do drugs and you don’t have to live like I used to then either, there are other ways!

A – Right.

B – That’s the realization that makes me sit here today and think – Wow, what an amazing life I can make for myself! I don’t have to follow others, and be adjusted or regulated, I myself can chose, and it’s all here in front of me.

A – Yes.

B – My life experience is invaluable...

A – Absolutely.

B - I have my experience, I can try new things, there are countless ways to do things, every human being is unique, every human being have their own... I don't have to try to fit them into boxes.

Deleuze and Guattari (1984) speak of the process of becoming not as a process of imitation but as generative of a new way of being. Tamboukou argues that “*Becoming is a process set into motion by the will to lose the self, leave the grounds on which you think you stand on, follow lines of flight, deterritorialize and disperse the self. Becoming is thus an open process, a nomadic journey, a wandering*” (Tamboukou, 2010b, p. 694). To Betty, her process of change entailed stopping to try to ‘fit herself or others into boxes’, not to “*follow others*”, but to allow for an open process of becoming. The participants’ narratives of becoming other are thus not narratives about adjustment but rather narratives about the desire to free oneself.

In this section, I will continue to explore the exiting process by engaging with the participants’ narratives about restorying their experiences and reimagining themselves. I will begin with exploring the structural, relational and agentic factors that intersected in the construction of a space in which one could restory oneself. I will then move onto exploring how the participants challenged restraining narratives about who they had been, were and could become, how they politicized their experiences and challenged problem saturated stories about themselves. After that, I will move on to exploring the limits to restorying oneself. Lastly, I will engage with the participants’ narratives about the importance of having restoried oneself in creating a barrier to re-entering prostitution.

### A space in which one can restory one’s life

The participants who had exited prostitution, and for whom the exit marked a rupture in their biographies, all spoke of the importance of a space in which one could restory one’s experiences and reimagine oneself as a critical part of one’s process of change. This space was constituted by an intersection of structural, relational and agentic factors. The participants’ exits were, as illustrated in the previous section, different. While some were gradual and premeditated, others were reactionary and sudden. After exiting, some, like Betty, transitioned directly into work, studies or treatment programs, entailing access to group and individual

therapy, while others had to tackle unemployment and welfare dependency. Depending on their access to resources and alternative social networks, the women received more or less support in the process of restoring their lives and reimagining themselves and their futures.

One of the most fundamental factors in creating a space in which one could restore one's experiences and reimagine oneself was alternatives to prostitution when making a living. As discussed previously, lack of other employment options served as a powerful trapping factor. Being freed from the material conditions of one's confinement was central to the participants' narratives about exiting. Therese, who after exiting prostitution received a sick pension, made sense of the financial support coupled with her therapeutic contact as what enabled her process of change.

I got help financially, I didn't have to do it anymore, if you don't need the money you don't do it, it's not that much fun after all... I'm being so sarcastic! (laughs). No but really, I got help financially and I had someone who was there to deal with all that was there, it all came out in a big mess, nightmares, the cutting myself in the arms, horrible images in my head during the days, and during the nights nightmares of babies being sexually abused. My head was a mess, I was so confused and we worked it through together. Plus I could just go home and lock the door and close the blinds and [pretend to] not be home. I knew I could still pay the rent by the end of the month. I could just sit there and breathe. I couldn't breathe in six months. I couldn't let my shoulders down to a relaxed position, with time I could though, and the anxiety attacks receded too, when I realized that I was going to be okay. If I just kept going there and kept sending in the papers (to the Social Insurance Agency), I would be okay.

Without being provided with the financial resources to exit prostitution, Therese saw no possibility to change her life. In order to be able to imagine a different future, she had to be in a safe space. As you might remember, Therese made sense of her entry into prostitution as a way to secure her own 'lockable haven'. To be able to pay rent and keep her apartment was critical to her process of change. Another central factor to the process of change mentioned in Therese's narrative was the availability of supportive relationships. In their study on exiting, Hedin and Månsson concluded that supportive relationships were central to the break away from prostitution (Hedin & Månsson, 2003, p. 234). The women they interviewed spoke of seeking support both in their personal networks and

professional support from social workers and therapists. In concert with Hedin and Månsson's conclusion, many of the participants spoke of the importance of certain relationships directly after the breakaway.

When I asked Yulia what was most difficult with exiting prostitution she said:

It's hard to find this person who can stand behind you and support you even when you fail. In prostitution I was... I knew all about it, I was successful, I was popular, I made a lot of money and I was sought after. I felt like a queen. To change direction in life, I had to start from scratch and feel like a loser, especially when you don't have this confidence, that you often lack when you're involved in prostitution. You often lack confidence and have low self-esteem, and if you do, it's even harder to start to build something from scratch. So what you don't have inside... You need to have someone beside you who can support you and that's the difficult thing, to find that person. I don't think you can do it on your own, you need a friend, a boyfriend or parents who get to know you in a different way. I don't think that we can accomplish anything in life entirely on our own. You have to have support, you have to cooperate, you need help. I think that's the answer to your question, you have to find someone who can support you.

Following a line of flight from prostitution, many of the participants found themselves in what Hedin and Månsson call a marginal situation, feeling as if they were suspended between two worlds (Hedin & Månsson, 1998, p. 72). As Yulia stated, she had to start to build her life 'from scratch', and reimagine herself outside of prostitution. Restorying one's experiences and oneself is a relational act. Cavarero's notion of identity as the outcome of a relational practice between the I and the you resonate in Yulia's story (Guaraldo, 2012, p. 98). As Cavarero argues, the self is dependent upon the other to tell her/his story and have her/his story told back to her/him. Yulia stated: "*you need a friend, a boyfriend or parents who get to know you in a different way*". While some of the participants found support in therapeutic relationships with social workers or therapists, others primarily sought support in their personal networks, they all spoke of restorying themselves as a relational act.

The notion of therapy as providing a supportive space in which one can restory one's life was for many of the participants far from uncomplicated. Many of them had previous negative experiences from therapy. When Nadia first broke

away from prostitution, she attempted to find a space in which she could process her experiences. In seeking help at a therapeutic unit she was pathologized and categorized.

N – I had decided to change my life and I got a therapeutic contact... (...)I felt like, now's the time to start over. (...) At this therapeutic unit I decided to tell them the truth. I needed to talk, I needed therapy. I needed help to get my life in order. So I tell them like it is and I almost feel like it was a mistake I made. Because the first thing they do is to... they had me fill out this fucking... I told them – I've just exited prostitution, I've done it for some years and I need to talk about it, I need to figure out why I do it, what it's about... And I also feel I have to get the chance to talk about all these traumatic things that have happened to me when I've sold myself. I literally told them that. And it makes me so upset when I think about it, because here I tell them what kind of help I need and what they do is they interview me, they use this fucking question guide... First and foremost I'm in this room with a woman, I was pretty tired, I hadn't slept in twenty four hours and these things are really difficult to talk about so I was a little... and then she said... she said I seemed absent minded and she said – Is it because you see somebody else in the room? Is there somebody else in the room? Like... I haven't slept for twenty four hours and my living situation entails that I'm sleeping on the floor...

A – Yes, it's a strange assumption to make.

N – Yes, to assume that... it was a little offensive... to assume I'm... I'm psychotic or not in touch with reality. I was just a little tired. Then she started to ask all these different questions and talk about borderline, that I might have a borderline personality disorder. (...) They wanted me to sign up for DBT (dialectic behavior therapy), borderline therapy. They were like – It's a form of therapy that might help if you've sold yourself and have had a lot of casual sexual relations. That in itself is a result of borderline, that you have a lot of casual sexual relations. They were like - That's why you were selling yourself, that's what it was about.

Traditional therapy often entails normalizing technologies of power in the form of dividing practices and objectification through diagnoses and labeling (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2006). Therapy then constitutes a space for turning the gaze inwards, disciplining the docile body and ensuring self-constraint. These processes enable the governing of subjects. Nadia's first attempt to find a space in which she could work through and restory her experiences of prostitution led to her

being pathologized and categorized as borderline. Her narrative was subjugated by the diagnostic narrative. Even though Nadia resisted being diagnosed, she was referred to DBT group therapy. Nadia expressed a desire to explore and make sense of her prostitution experience “*I need to figure out why I do it, what it’s about*”. Psychiatric expert knowledge individualized and depoliticized Nadia’s experience as an effect of her assumed borderline personality disorder. Nadia narrated how she in group therapy was not allowed to talk about her experiences of prostitution, as prostitution was considered a form of self harm. The parallel individual therapy sessions were mostly spent processing the experience of being pathologized and the governing of her in group. As Nadia was unable to explore and restory her experiences, her attempt to seek support failed. It was not until some years later she received any help, in Nadia’s narrative help is equated to “*being understood*”, “*listened to*” and “*respected*”.

I got in touch with the Prostitution Unit when this guy was convicted for the rape, that’s also why I grew, because then, then I got help. That’s why I feel such sorrow for all the times I haven’t received any help. Because I realize many girls... if they would have been offered help, gotten help, real help... It’s not true what people say – They don’t want any help. It’s not true! I would gladly have accepted help. I’m happy for the little help I’ve received and it has made me grow. I have for example... if I hadn’t grown by going to the therapy I’m receiving at the Prostitution Unit... I feel like she understands me, she knows... she knows what it’s about... If she wouldn’t have... If I wouldn’t have grown so much on my own, or been listened to, or gotten that respect, or had people tell me – Nadia, you’re worth something, you’re worthy of love, you really are! You have the right to stand up for yourself!

While therapy can be a form of governing of subjects through disciplining technologies of power, it can also be a site of resistance. Narrative therapists Catrina Brown and Tod Augusta-Scott state that “*While therapy can evoke conservatizing, normalizing and regulating processes of the self in its operation as a social strategy of power it can also be an effort to challenge the discursive practices of power and knowledge that have become problematically embedded within people’s lives*” (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2006, p. xvii). The process of subjectification through which we turn ourselves into subjects involves both power and resistance. Nadia and many of the other participants spoke of therapy as a space in which they could challenge the constraining aspects of their stories about themselves, a space in which multiple interpretations of the past, present

and future became possible. To Nadia, therapy became part of a space in which she could begin to challenge the dominant or totalizing story that had been constitutive of her life, the story of her being ‘the only person on this earth that god did not love’. In this space she could begin to reimagine herself as someone “*worthy of love*”, someone who has “*the right to stand up for herself*”.

### Challenging restraining narratives about the self

Stories of the self are constructed in social and relational contexts. As Cavarero argues, our own self-understanding is never completely ours, even our ‘who’, the answer to the question of who we are, is given to us from the other, from outside. This entails an ontological vulnerability to others acts and stories about ourselves. Many of the participants had experiences of being ascribed negative meaning, some of these meanings had been internalized as oppressive truths and had led to what in narrative therapy is referred to as ‘problem saturated dominant stories’ about the self (Madigan, 2011). Despite the fact that some accounts become dominant and privileged over others, there is not one single story that could possibly encompass the whole of our lived experience, we are all composed of many stories. For the participants, restorying one’s life entailed challenging oppressive and restraining narratives about who or what one had been, were and could become.

In restorying themselves, the participants spoke of remembering themselves differently, remembering different stories about themselves, stories that had been subjugated by dominant problem saturated stories. When I asked Elena what she believed made her process of change possible, she said:

E – I think it has something to do with the person I was before I started... before I ended up in the sex industry. To dare to remember that there was a person *before* who I was during some periods - a worn down, drug addicted prostitute. There were not a lot of traces of who I had been. So my strength, my primary strength I think comes from me thinking that I’m smart. It may sound self-conceited.

A – No, I don’t think so.

E – It’s the only thing that I’ve been holding on to, that has stopped me from slipping away. That, before this, I was ambitious, I wanted upwards, I wanted forwards.

Elena remembering a different self, a different story about herself, was critical to her exiting process. As she stated, it kept her from ‘slipping away’, from her being reduced to a stigmatized identity. This different story about herself helped her to destabilize the problem saturated story of her as a “*worn down, drug addicted prostitute*” and imagine herself differently.

The process of restorying entailed exploring how certain meanings had been attributed to the self. Therese narrated how therapy provided a space in which she could explore how she had come to know herself in a less-than-worthy way, who had been involved in the construction of that story of herself, how it had restrained her and what losses it had caused her. The psychological and physical abuse that she had been subjected to had led to her internalizing ideas of herself as unworthy. Therese narrated how she since she was about ten had perceived herself as being “*very ugly*” and how that perception of herself had restrained her.

T – I’ve thought of all validation as good validation even if it’s just about me looking good in a certain outfit. The funny thing is that... I still have a lot of complexes when it comes to the way I look, I had before as well, I always have. I’ve been ugly ever since... I think it started when I was ten. I mean real ugly, so ugly that I can’t even be seen! I’ve tried to dress that ugliness away by being sexy instead... I don’t know if I lost track of the topic now?

A – No it’s fine.

T – And I’m still extremely ugly some days, and deformed and there are no clothes in the wardrobe I can wear, because they all emphasize something that is so grotesque that it can’t be seen. Because I don’t want to be looked at like a grotesque, handicapped, abused human being or a UFO really, that everyone can see has been used. Then I have to stay in because there’s nothing I can wear. And I can’t walk around in my underwear because then I can see the skin changing... I can see the skin growing and moving so it’s... Even during the periods I’ve made myself very pretty, if you put it that way, when I’ve been working or whatever, I still have felt ugly. And when people say – You’re so pretty, or you look really good in that, I know that that’s just something they say to be nice. That’s the kind of things you say to people who are deformed like – Oh, you look really good in that, nobody will notice that half your face is gone. I mean... I never realized before how dysfunctional I am. I’ve thought that that’s what it should be like - you feel deformed and ugly so you paint it over and make yourself pretty. And advantages, you get them by being extremely friendly and a real dream girl you know. Then you get what you

want and what regular people are like I have no idea, that's what it's been like.

A – Right...

T – If I would have had a lot of money, if I would have been rich, then I guarantee I would have been one of them who do surgery after surgery after surgery. I have a million flaws in my face and on my body. Some days I honestly think, if I win the lottery that's what I'll do, and other days like when I've been in therapy I feel like I don't have to do it, like I'm okay the way I am. But now I have an idea of where it comes from, I have a good understanding of it now and that's also a result of having been through therapy, I understand that it's not about the way you look but everything you represent you want to cut off. There's a lot to work on!

Even though Therese still struggled with the perception of herself as ugly, it was no longer normalized or perceived as an unchangeable truth. She had explored how she came to know herself in this way and in her narrative she made connections between being constituted as “ugly” and having to “*paint it over*” and make herself “*pretty*” or to be “*extremely friendly*” a “*real dream girl*”. Having “*an idea*”, a “*good understanding*” of “*where it comes from*”, how she was constituted to be, Therese was able to challenge oppressive truths about herself and perceive herself differently.

Dominant narratives allow little space for the complexities and contradictions of life. They subjugate and obscure other narratives and experiences. Therese's narrative was largely a narrative about neglect and abuse, lacking in agency. While narrating, she also remembered a different time, a time in which she was loved and cared for.

T – My life was good at one point. When I was born I was given away immediately.

A – Oh?

T – Yes, there were a lot of conflicts. I don't know whether my mom had some kind of post-partum psychosis or if she just regretted having me, but then dad had me and this sounds completely bizarre and if this was somebody else's story I was telling I would be crying now... but I don't know it's just...

A – Mm...

T – That's what happened anyway. He had me but he couldn't take care of me so I got to stay with my grandma and grandpa and I lived there until I was four, and it was the best time of my life. I remember it, despite me being

so little I remember it clearly. I lived there now and then after that as well but then it was more like I was visiting. It's like I've been looking for it ever since. I didn't realize that before I started therapy but I have always looked for families. I've always become very close to my boyfriend's mothers and I always wanted to become part of the family. I've always connected with kind mothers. I've always been like – Can you be my spare mom? It's all I've ever wanted and everything that has reminded me about the time I spent with grandma and grandpa, even though I was just a kid then, I've been drawn to. It can be colors, or textiles, or scents, even if I might not think that it's particularly beautiful it's what I associate it with. It enters right in... into whatever it is you have in here that makes you long for what has been so much. It's something about someone being nice, like when you say – Don't feel any guilt or shame... it's the same feeling as when I was a child and had nightmares and my grandma sat and stroke my hair, stroke, stroke and stroke for literally an hour or so, until I fell asleep. It's the same feeling and it's so strong, there are really strong feelings but I can't put my finger on why all these things are evoked by one thing, that's how it feels at least...

A – But it seems like you're drawn to what's good Therese?

T – Yes, I am. It's ...

A – It's a good thing.

T – Yes, you mean like that, you can be drawn to what's destructive too, I've been that too, a lot

A – Mm.

T – I've been in terrible relationships in which I've been shoved and beaten and called names. He could only have sex if he could be really , that's what turned him on and... You buy into things like that when you're not really in yourself. But, no, I have been drawn to what's good anyway because his mother was really kind and I stuck around because of that. They would let me stay in their house at times, in the countryside and I got to help her to carry in wood and stuff like that and I was like – Oh, I'm in heaven! That's all that I want. So you're right, I'm drawn to security and... I haven't really thought of it in that way... hm...

In this extract Therese narrated a different time in her life, a time when her life was 'good', when she experienced being loved and cared for. She narrated how she ever since then, since she moved from her grandma and grandpa, had been "*drawn to*" everything that reminded her of this time. By interpreting what Therese said as her having been "*drawn to what is good*", I intervened

in her narrative and thereby participated in constructing a counter-narrative to Therese's dominant narrative about herself as self-destructive and lacking agency. By separating herself from the dominant narrative, Therese was able to see aspects of her experience that contradict that narrative. The fact that she remained in a relationship despite the abuse, which at first was primarily made sense of as a result of self-destructivity, was then rather made sense of as a result of her longing for companionship, family and being cared for and loved. Challenging the problem saturated narrative brought forth untold stories of agency regarding how she had responded to and managed situations she had been in.

Sawicki argues that "*freedom lies in our capacity to discover the historical links between certain modes of self-understanding, and modes of domination, and to resist the ways in which we have been classified and identified by dominant discourses*" (Sawicki, 1991) p. 44). Challenging problem saturated stories often entails challenging larger cultural stories within these stories. In narrating our personal experience, we draw on the narratives of the culture in which we live. Being entangled with culturally imposed expectations might lead to difficulties to recognize the covert and powerful influence that dominant cultural narratives have on one's personal narrative. Many of the participants had internalized ideas of themselves as 'whores', 'sexual beings for others'. Restorying their lives, they found alternative frames for attributing meaning to their experiences that entailed an understanding of the gendered and politicized nature of their lives. In this process the participants made connections between their experiences and other's, and thereby challenged individualized and decontextualized interpretations of prostitution experience. Acknowledging both the difference and the commonality between women with prostitution experience, Elena spoke of her understanding of prostitution.

E – I'm part of this group for people with prostitution experience, and you can tell how different we are, you mustn't forget that... we can't build a party on this, that much I can say because we are incredibly different. (...) You can talk all casually about how you just came from seeing a client or you can talk all casually about what we should do about the law and that prostitution is wrong, but everyone have different experiences. Though I haven't met anyone who has said that it's all good. I've never met anyone who... and this really pisses me off when people say – There are actually those who... I have a friend in Stockholm..., and it's always the same story, she went to law school and she financed her whole degree. I've never met her actually, I've *never* met her! Have you heard of her too?

A – Yeah sure.

E – She seems to be an amazing woman, she did it all... it's almost beautiful, she was living grand and you know... But no, I've never met anyone who... I've met people who... I mean girls who... and this was in Copenhagen, who managed to keep up a façade for pretty long and then... the problems might not have started with prostitution... It's not there. All of a sudden there's a day when they're not so cheerful and you're like – What happened? – Well, I'm having problems with my parents. – Oh, what's going on? – Well, my dad's been raping me since I was two and I can't really go home for Christmas. Well, that's a bit of a problem, isn't it? And to say that that doesn't have anything to do with you loosing respect for your body, to the point where you sell it... that's, once again, retarded! There's such a strong connection.... Sexual violence is the strongest reason I've found to why you start selling yourself and then there are other reasons, but that's not a reason, that's a fucking bridge into prostitution...

By placing her experience in a larger structure of sexual violence against women Elena politicized and deindividualized her experience. Elena came to know herself as a 'sexual being for others', as less than worthy through being sexually abused in her early teens. Patriarchal ideas about the 'whore/prostitute' constituted her as 'bad girl'. In restorying her experience, she placed the problem outside of herself, in larger structures and deindividualized her personal narrative by actively rejecting accounts of herself that wrote out the social.

In restorying their experience, the participants, more than just seeing their experience in relations to other's, also reflected on how oppressive dominant narratives about 'women' had affected their perceptions of themselves, their bodies and their sexuality. The stories we tell about our bodies are mediated by social processes that are inextricably linked to discourses on gender, sexuality and desire. The body is entangled in regimes of truth and knowledge. Dominant cultural stories about women tend to be sexualizing and subjugating stories, replete with language and images of the privileges associated with male sexual desire. Heterosexual women are taught that their bodies should please men, as this is a way for women to access power in a patriarchal society. By restorying their experiences, the participants reflected on how they lived stories that were directly connected to patriarchal dominant stories. The process of restorying her life led Betty to realize how she had been restrained by patriarchal stories of her as a 'woman'.

B – Society tells you that you should be the caring one, the one who takes care of and pampers. What fucking role is that to play? I quit, I don't want any roles, or masks anymore, I have my own ideas, I want do things my own way!

A – (laughs)

B – I'll emancipate myself and you know, wow, that's how I'll think! Until I find something else... you know I will remain open. And such a relationship, I think... If I ever find a man... I will be a fucking bitch you know! I will fucking scrutinize every little thing... No, I don't want to be with him, let's try someone else... (laughs)

A – (laughs)

While reflecting on her life experience, Betty exclaimed that she quit, she quit roles and masks. Disentangling herself from restraining narratives of who she was as a 'woman' extended to who she was as a sexual being. Betty spoke of a class she had taken and a discovery she had made:

B – I went to a class that helped me a lot actually, it was about intimacy and integrity and about constructing boundaries, about saying no and yes, about affirming... what I've suppressed my whole life you know... We were to touch each other, not here [points to her breasts] but as soon as we felt... We closed our eyes and then people walked around and (shows the touching of her body) but as soon as there was something in our emotional system, or just something that didn't feel right we were supposed to say no. And then someone else was allowed to continue, someone with whom it felt pleasurable and then you would be like – Yes, that okay.

A – Interesting.

B – Yes, it was really interesting, to just lay there and receive. At first I thought it was fucking disgusting that someone would (shows the touching of her body). At first I thought - What the fuck are you doing!?! But then... after day one there was such sensuality between a couple, a man and a woman, or there were more than just them, there were several. They had said - You might get turned on, but you can't act on it, just accept it. Accept that sensuality can have that effect, when you touch each other. And there was one couple there and I was like – Wow, what the fuck? What fucking perverts, that's gross!

A – (laughs)

B – And I went home and then when I came home I sat and reflected about what had happened during the day and I was like – Oh, so this is what I want! Intimacy, sensuality, to be able to meet at that level, yes! And that's what I

will have... I admitted that when I went back there – I just have to say, at first I thought what fucking perverts you guys were but thank you for letting me see it! My idea of sexuality was so fucked up... To see what you may use your bodies for, to meet, and give into, and feel that you may receive, I may receive... to see... it was really good to get to see that... and they were like – Thanks, thanks for being honest. It probably shocked them that I had thought that way but yes...

A – What was it that you saw that you liked?

B – The softness, the intimacy, the closeness, that they could give into themselves, that it looked so natural.

Being in a place of discovery Betty was able to challenge dominant narratives of what it is to be a woman and a sexual being and thereby explore her sexual desire. Yulia also told a story of a sexual becoming. As you might remember Yulia made sense of her entry into prostitution as conditioned by her need for validation. Her need for validation was within the patriarchal institution of prostitution reconfigured to the desire to be chosen. Her own sexual desire remained unexplored as her sexual being was defined by a man desiring her. Restorying her experience and reimagining herself entailed exploring her sexuality.

The past year I've had to explore this, at the age of thirty-four. And of course it was different after I realized what it is I want and what's important. Before, and not only with clients, sex was a means for me to get stuff - validation, money, material things, attention, love, all these things. And I couldn't just be myself because then I wouldn't get... (...) I was constantly on the alert. I was ready to perform, to do anything. The guys might not even have needed it but that was the way I thought about it, I could only get love if I did something. I had to work with my therapist on this, to just be myself and enjoy sex this time, to not act all the time. If they love me they will love me anyway. It was really hard to let go of this though... I think that was the hardest to let go of. To just relax and say – No, I don't want sex, I'm not turned on, I'm not horny, not right now. It took me quite some time to realize that.

Reimagining herself entailed that Yulia reimagined herself as a 'sexual being in her own right', not a 'sexual being for others'. This process both entailed exploring her sexual desires and being able to say no to sex when she did not want it.

## The limits of restorying

As stated before, some of the participants' narratives about exiting were celebratory of what had been accomplished, others reflected the difficulties with, and maybe also the limits to, restorying oneself and starting a 'new' life. Patriarchal narratives about female and male sexuality were central to many of the participants' lives and life stories. Experiences of being sexualized, objectified and constituted as a 'sexual being for others' had deeply impacted many of the participants' lives. While Betty and Yulia spoke of restorying their experiences and reimagining themselves as 'sexual beings in their own right', other participants spoke of how they still struggled with sex, intimacy and relationships. To Nadia, sex was complicated:

N – It's often complicated when you have sex with someone who you might be attracted to and you like and all of that. Because I still have those mechanisms, I don't know how to... When they... Maybe you like them and they might like you too and then when they... I'm still very shut down and then they ask – What do you like? Like – I want it to be good for you! Then I go blank, sometimes I even think that it was easier to charge for sex because then you didn't have to have that talk. Even if I never took any pleasure in that sex it was still... I have had voluntary sex with people I like and then I have realized that – Shit, I'm shutting down again, then it's almost harder, there are so much more feelings than when I charge and I just do what that person wants me to do. And I guess that's why nowadays I prefer one night stands and not having sex with people who you know, because it always get to that difficult stuff, the stuff that I find difficult and then I just want to escape... And well, right now I'm in this phase where I don't feel like sex at all and I don't have it. It always seems to get to that, and the friends that I've had... who I've had a different relationship with before and don't anymore but still see know that... It's actually easier to sell yourself than to have voluntary sex...

A – I think I understand what you mean, in those situations it's about you and your sexuality and what you want and like and of course that's an entirely different thing than being someone who just exists for the other...

N – But the sick thing is that I think that's easier, when I'm in that situation. I've gotten angst when people have started to ask stuff like – How come you're so cold? But then I know that it's not like I've felt good about selling myself, it always involves a feeling of disgust, but a feeling of disgust I at least have been able to handle...

Nadia had never had the chance to explore her own sexuality, sex to her had always been about pleasing the other person, suppressing her own feelings and needs.

N – I'm used to always suppressing myself and my needs. When it's... and then I don't... When there's a guy who's nice, or seem to be nice, I still don't trust it. It's almost like they put a knife in me when... When I think they pretend that they care about me. Then sometimes I feel like – Put some money here... give me the money and tell me what you want me to do. I don't say that of course but it's like I want it to be like that anyway. It's like it's about taking care of another person's needs instead of your own.

A – Is it part of some sort of protection? I mean do you protect yourself from potentially being disappointed? Or that person harming you?

N – Yes, because I'm so scared that... It's something I still haven't processed, that fear and I don't dare to process it entirely because I have been so disappointed in people who I have trusted so much and then it has turned out that they are rapists anyway or something else... and I'm scared, I'm so scared. They might be nice to me now, but then it turns out they are not. It's like you wear a shield by looking at all men as johns even when you don't charge.

Nadia's life story was lined with experiences of abuse, she had been subjected to abuse both within and outside of prostitution, and then often by men she knew. Processing her experiences of prostitution was not only about reimagining herself, beginning to see herself as someone worthy of love, but also about reimagining others, daring to see men as something else than just rapists or 'johns'. When I asked Nadia what the struggle to not re-enter prostitution was about, she stated that it was about 'her view on sex and herself as a person', she continued to say:

I know that's what the struggle is about. It's the same as it was before, but now I'm more aware of it... I've made up my mind I won't become this tragic and broken individual just because that's who I have been. I guess I'm struggling to take the step across this middle ground that you're in and sometimes you take that step but then at other times you take a step back... But I'm struggling with my own thoughts a lot, trying to... But it's hard because at the same time you're thinking... to protect yourself – Would this person be willing to buy me? Would he?

Nadia's narrative speaks of the difficulties of restorying oneself after a lifetime of having been storied into being as a 'sexual being for others'. Nadia was struggling

to “*take a step across the middle ground*”. To her, daring to trust others and to become a ‘sexual being in her own right’ had proven to be a lengthy process. Nadia was not the only participant who spoke of difficulties with sex after exiting prostitution. In their study, Hedin and Månsson concluded that dissociation as a tactic to manage emotion often led to long term difficulties in experiencing sexual pleasure (Hedin & Månsson, 2003, p. 233). Therese, who similarly to Nadia managed emotion in prostitution through dissociation, also struggled to experience sex differently, unlike Nadia she was in a relationship.

I see things with different eyes now. I see if someone... or I sense if someone is a potential client you know. I've got an eye for it, how to develop that kind of relationship and make money off something this person thinks is buying a sexual service. He might have an intimate conversation with me, to me it's just small talk. And when it comes to keeping someone company, I can be very... what is it called? Courting? When you're not cold and tough, but kind and soft and pleasant to be around. Then you just hope the person doesn't fall in love because you're not interested, you're cold. At the same time that's something I've learned, or how to put it... and I even...this is really hard (laughs). I've caught myself thinking... when I've had a bad sexual experience or sex that I really didn't want... I've... before I've dared to talk about it or say no. (But now) when I've agreed to it I've justified it by thinking - I'm going to make sure I get paid somehow. Sex is very much associated with something you don't want, but agree to do because it's a job. And it's really horrible, my boyfriend doesn't know what I've worked with but he knows what happened when I was a child. He knows all about it and he knows I sometimes feel bad about having sex but he can't read me. I mean, he wants me to tell him because he can't read my thoughts and he doesn't notice if I shut down and I'm not there, because I sound like I'm there. But I'm not, I'm elsewhere and afterwards I just want to cut up my arms. This doesn't happen nowadays but it used to. Instead of telling him, I agreed on having sex and then I thought if he does something to me that I don't want then I have the right to do something back. You start trading you know... It's really a bit of... It's an occupational injury in some way. I don't want to sound like some experienced, jaded person in the industry but you start to put a price on yourself and the things people do to you. If you accept certain things you really don't want to but you get paid for them... it's a constant pricing of things when you get in to it. But a relationship is supposed to be about talking to each other, being intimate with each other because you like each other and not because of some prostitution-like deal, but on bad days...

when my thoughts are really dark, then I think like that... and I haven't... sex to me is still not just something that you have with your boyfriend, it could be several things, and it has been since I was a child. Sex has always been, there are probably a thousand sides to the word sex... it's not necessarily that you creep under the covers and make love and then fall asleep together, there's a lot, there is forced sex, there is sex that you're talked into, there is paid sex, and there is sex as pay. I mean, that's something that's part of me, you become a business woman with your own body...

Therese's and Nadia's narratives speak of the difficulties of, or maybe even limits to, restorying oneself. They both narrated a lifetime of experiences of being spoken into existence as sexual beings for others. This does not entail that change is impossible, as other participants' narratives show, however, for some it seemed to be a more lengthy process than for others.

### How having restoried yourself worked as a barrier against re-entering prostitution

To most of the participants, exiting prostitution marked a rupture in their life stories. In restorying themselves, these participants made new sense of their involvement in prostitution, challenged restraining narratives of who they had been, were and could become, deindividualized and politicized their experience and began to imagine themselves differently. Many of the participants narrated how restorying their lives had led to a deeper insight into their emotional experience and an increased sense of self-worth. To these participants, this process had created a barrier to them reentering prostitution.

Despite Nadia's difficult financial situation and her struggle with thoughts to re-enter prostitution she spoke of there being a barrier preventing her from doing it. When I asked her how she saw prostitution now she said:

Ehm... I see it like a living suicide really, it's like you haven't killed your body, but you have... It's like... I see it like every time I do it it's like I kill myself and die somehow and then when you have to live your everyday life it's like a constant struggle to resurrect. That's how I see it. That's how I feel. I still think about it sometimes, about starting back again, you know at times... (...) I have a different emotional life now since I'm not as shut down and that makes me feel uncomfortable about it. I don't feel comfortable with it so when I get these thoughts that maybe I should start selling myself again since I need money. I

owe a lot of money and this is a way of getting money quickly, but my feelings are so close now... I'm not as cold as I used to be. (...) Sometimes I feel like I have to do it because my economy is so bad, but then I feel my body cramping, my whole being resists it. That's how I feel and that's how I felt then too... the time I needed money and sold myself. My whole body was cramping and I was like... - Can't you tell? I mean the two guys who bought me... Because I couldn't hide what I felt, it must have been so apparent. I don't understand that that turns people on. No, I don't understand that. (...) You subject yourself to so much risk, the physical part of what could happen, it's just a little part of the whole... what happens inside... I rather cry a little too much than be as shut down as I was back then because it was scary.

Nadia narrated how her process of change had altered her emotional state, her "*feelings being so close*" made prostitution unbearable. Patton argues that becoming other entail shifts of feeling or attitude which alters 'the structure' of a person (Patton, 2000, p. 86). Such occasions of becoming may have the effect of opening up certain paths and closing off others, altering the individual's capacity to affect and become affected, as well as her desires, preferences and goals (Patton, 2000, p. 85). This resonates in Nadia's narrative. Having restored herself seemed to have closed off the path to prostitution.

Even though exiting had entailed a line of flight from the dispositive of prostitution, several of the participants were still territorialized in constricting poverty. After exiting prostitution, Therese received a sick pension for about two years. When we met she had just started a work training program with the intent to get back to the regular job market. However, she suffered financially from the situation she was in. The thought of re-entering prostitution had crossed her mind more than once.

T – I go every week or every other week and meet this job coach and she is really nice but... well... It doesn't really help that much... the entitlement is... like I said before it's catastrophically low and she understands I have to work on the side, off the books. She thinks it's really bad and she wouldn't report it... but it's counterproductive to me. I feel like... well if I can't support myself, if I can't survive like this then I have to find another way and then... well... some days I think I might have to start back with my old livelihood, get back to that world... but I really don't want to! I've even stood outside that club that offered me a job because I was a good dancer, what a fucking talent

to have (laughs). I stood outside with a bag in my hand and was about to knock on the door... there's a concrete wall, a black door and you don't hear a sound from inside, they advertise new hot shows every night. I couldn't enter that door. I guess therapy has helped me (laughs) I couldn't, I mean I really couldn't... I thought there must be another way to work off the books without that humiliation, there must be. I just fucking have to keep looking... I'll see if there are other pubs that need a dish washer at night... it's a lousy pay and your shoulders really hurt, it's loud and the guests are obnoxious but yet it's better... it's easier, so yes...

A – And what... in from you feeling ambivalent about leaving and you feeling that it was somewhat sad or at least not a given 'til today when you stand outside that club and you can't enter, what was it that had happened?

T – I wanted to, but I couldn't...

A – Yes, so what was it that had happened?

T – I'm a little puzzled myself, I didn't know that that barrier was there, it really had black and yellow warning tape all over it, like - You can't do it! In my mind I can, almost but... it has become a barrier. In my mind I can, but when I was standing there looking... because I was standing there looking and it was just like - It can't be my world.

Therese literally spoke of the path to reenter prostitution as closed off, closed off with “*black and yellow warning tape*”. Having restored herself had significantly altered what she was ‘capable of doing’.

Even though Nadia and Therese both struggled financially, they managed to get by without re-entering prostitution. Camilla on the other hand told a story of a time when she perceived she had no other choice but to resort to prostitution. Camilla and I got in touch through her mid-wife. Camilla was in her early forties and on sickness benefits. She comes from a working class background and entered into prostitution in her early twenties, just after her son was born. Camilla was the only one of the participants whose narrative seemed blurred by distance and time. When we met sixteen years had passed since she exited prostitution. During our interview she recounted fragments of her prostitution experiences. Her stories seemed like faded memories, almost of a different life. There was however one story that was different, it was a story of an event that until recently had haunted Camilla. Meeting the man who later became her husband marked a rupture in Camilla's life story. They were both addicted to heroin at that time but managed to rehabilitate from the drug together. Camilla exited prostitution and they got married. Ten years later they were in a financially desperate situation. Camilla's

husband was arrested and later incarcerated after what was supposed to be a one-time drug-deal intended to get them by until their finances were sorted out. Camilla was devastated, her son was living with her and she saw no other way than to re-enter prostitution. She sold sex a few times to get by.

C – What I did then almost destroyed our marriage. For three years I thought about it sixty percent of the time I was awake. I couldn't get over it. When they let him out I felt... You know I had been able to stay drug free for so long but then I felt – I'm so dirty! Everything came back. What I did then harmed me more than anything I had done before and I remember... my husband told me – I will never leave you! I was suicidal at one point for leaving my son. But my husband is very intelligent and kind, he was addicted to heroin himself but he really helped me a lot. He healed me and made me feel safe and I started to feel good about myself but all that we had built together fell apart with those three times. It did something to me and it was horrible because I couldn't get over it.

A – Right, did you tell him then, when it happened?

C – No but three months ago... I talked to him and I told him the truth. I was lying on the bed and I was looking at the TV and I said – Something happened when you were away, it didn't mean anything. And you know, he said – It's been such a long time Camilla, I'm over it. He knew that I had done it for the money. I hadn't been away from him during those ten years and we had built... I mean I had started to feel good and I was off my anti-depressants and all of that and so what I did then harmed me a lot and it almost wrecked my marriage. In the beginning when I started it was easier, it took some time to get used to it but I needed food for my son and then the addiction took over. When I became a heroin addict I didn't care about myself. But then... I was married and I had the methadone and all of that then it harmed me a lot, it did!

A – Do you think it was the circumstances that made it so much worse then? You were in a different place in your life?

C – I had grown, I don't know how to put it. It was like worlds apart... to do things like that when you're sober and you've been to therapy once a week for twelve years and you have a man who has been there for you... It was like I was a different person. It would have been like if you would have done it. Do you know what I mean? If I would find myself in such a situation again, say if something would happen to my husband, I would never have been able to go back to that. In some way I've healed myself throughout these years and I've built something different. When I first started out it was to take care of my child, and then it was the addiction that cost me so much but now I couldn't do it.

Camilla spoke of becoming other, of having become “*another person*” since the time she was involved in prostitution. She spoke of her process of change in terms of being ‘healed’. Having to re-enter prostitution after this process was extremely damaging to her. Exiting prostitution did for most of the participants entail a fundamental shift in the perception of one’s sense of self and one’s involvement in prostitution. Some of the participants made sense of this shift as closing off the path to prostitution indefinitely.

#### **10.4 Concluding remarks**

As I stated in the beginning of the chapter, exiting prostitution was, for most of the participants, far more complicated than just ‘finding the exit’ and ‘walking out’. The participants’ narratives spoke of how the dispositif of prostitution creates ‘trapping factors’, factors that serve as barriers to exiting. The trapping factors of prostitution are complex, they are effects of economic marginalization and stigmatization, and entail both material, social and emotional barriers. Depending on how one was reterritorialized, different trapping factors emerged in the participants’ narratives. While some of the participants made sense of the same structural disadvantage that made them enter into prostitution as what prevented them from exiting, others spoke of how prostitution, despite their structurally disadvantaged positions, enabled them to consume themselves into being but also trapped them in a circle of making and spending money. These narratives spoke of how the dispositif of prostitution intersect with dispositifs of social inequality and the dispositif of consumer capitalism in creating trapping factors. Other participants narrated how, being negatively reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution entailed that their lives and identities had become entangled with ‘the prostitute’ and had led to a sense of unworthiness and a feeling of being permanently placed outside of society. Having internalized the prostitution stigma, these participants spoke of finding it difficult to imagine a life outside of prostitution.

Despite the trapping factors that the dispositif of prostitution generates, some of the participants had exited. In engaging with their exiting stories I explored the intrinsically interconnected structural, relational and agentic factors of exiting prostitution. No matter if the exit was made sense of as reactionary, initiated by an event or a realization, or as gradual, a premeditated decision that led to a phasing out process, it was dependent on that there being other opportunities available for the participants. However, what made the participants open to these opportunities seemed to be a change in perception of one’s sense of self or one’s

involvement in prostitution. The exiting stories all involved events or times that had led to a shift in the perception of one's sense of self or one's involvement in prostitution. These events marked critical points in the process of exiting, points that became important in the process of restorying one's life.

The stories about exiting that I engaged with in the chapter were stories of change. For Elena, Nadia, Yulia, Betty, Therese, Camilla and Johanna exiting prostitution marked a larger rupture in their life stories, a rupture that generated stories of change, flight and movement, stories of becoming other. In the beginning of the chapter I professed that I take a particular interest in the role of stories in the exiting process, as I understand the process of restorying as central to the process of change. In exploring the participants' narratives about the process of restorying I concluded that restorying was a multi-layered process, affected by the person's perception of available social networks and resources to support the change of their narratives. The process of restorying entailed exploring how certain meanings had been attributed to the self. By exploring how one had come to know oneself in a particular way a space opened up for reimagining oneself differently. The challenging of oppressive and restraining stories about who one had been, were and could become brought forth untold stories and made multiple interpretations of the past, present and future possible. In challenging problem saturated stories of themselves the participants also challenged larger cultural stories within these stories. By finding alternative frames for attributing meaning to their experiences and making connections between their experiences and others the participants made visible the gendered and politicized nature of their lives.

The participants' stories about exiting challenge individualized and decontextualized explanations of people's experiences of prostitution. Viewing the subject as situated within a dispositif structured by all those contributing factors of society that support the performance of prostitution, prostitution is located within the larger culture not inside the private isolation of the person. Understanding the exit from prostitution requires an understanding of the politics of class and gender. Reducing the trapping factors of prostitution is first and foremost an issue of structural change and challenging othering processes. However, as structural disadvantage remains individuals who have been storied into being as hopeless, helpless or as existing solely for others restory themselves and live other lives.



# PART V



## 11. CONCLUSION

While scholars struggle over the meaning of prostitution, women involved in prostitution, apart from struggling with making sense of their experiences, also struggle with a whole range of other things: how to make a living, how to stay safe, how to stay sane, how to protect themselves and people around them from the stigma and how to make a new life for themselves after exiting prostitution. Although the debate on prostitution by no means is unimportant, I believe that its antagonist character hampers rather than fosters social and political change.

As I stated in the beginning of the thesis, one of my starting points when embarking on this project was to challenge the confines and constraints of the prostitution debate by attempting to shift the focus from *what prostitution is* (work or violence, empowerment or exploitation) to *how prostitution operates* (how power relations, knowledges, discourses and practices interconnect in making particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience possible). This has been my attempt to create a discursive space in which the complexities and contradictions of prostitution experience can be explored. To achieve this, I have employed a genealogical approach. I have treated prostitution as a dispositif, a grid of knowledges, discourses, power relations and practices. Viewing prostitution as a dispositif entails a shift from the search for what prostitution is to an exploration of how it operates as a ‘machinic contraption’: how it structures what can be known and said about prostitution, how discourses on prostitution tied to power/knowledge have effects on the regulation of prostitution and how it works to produce certain forms of experiences and narratives about prostitution and shapes ‘the prostitute’ as a particular subject. When entering into prostitution women are reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution. When viewing the subject as situated within a dispositif structured by all those contributing factors of society that support the

performance of prostitution, prostitution is located within the larger culture not inside the private isolation of the person. Rather than studying ‘the prostitute’/ women involved in prostitution, I wanted to turn the light towards the larger culture and towards society. As Laurie Shrage (1994) contends, the exploration of why some women enter into prostitution does not explain why there is a demand for prostitution or the cultural principles that serve to organize it and condition our understanding of it. This is thus not a thesis about ‘prostitutes’, but rather a thesis about the dispositif of prostitution, about society that produces unequal life chances for people and about the production of difference that leads to the stigmatization, discrimination and marginalization of women involved in prostitution.

In this final chapter, I will discuss what the research participants’ narratives have revealed about how prostitution operates as a dispositif. I will also reflect on what might be concluded from my attempt to allow different narratives about prostitution to enter into dialogue with each other. At the very end, I will consider how this study may lead to new questions and further studies.

### **11.1 What have the research participants’ narratives conveyed about the dispositif of prostitution?**

The dispositif of prostitution is an assemblage of narratives, myths, markets, actual bodies and movement, desires, power relations, knowledges, policies, laws, policing and regulation. Throughout the last four chapters, I have explored the research participants’ narratives about their prostitution experience with the hope that these narratives may tell us something about how the dispositif of prostitution operates. In this section, I will summarize the results of the analysis and develop my thoughts on the dispositif.

#### **Entering the dispositif of prostitution**

The dispositif of prostitution consists of complex relations of power, domination and resistance. These relations were first explored in Chapter Seven, in which the participants’ beginning stories troubled the notion of the entry into prostitution as a clear cut matter of ‘choice’/‘force’. Most of the participants made sense of their entry into prostitution as both an effect of power and as a means of resistance. These participants’ beginning stories spoke of how power relations and forces of desire connected in creating conditions of possibility for resistance. If the participants’ would have been territorialized differently, their desires to become other – ‘independent’, ‘untouchable’, ‘one’s own’ - might have resulted

in different lines of flight, propelling them in less precarious directions. However, social inequality - the effects of intersecting structures of, for example class, gender and disability - worked to limit their opportunities and constrained their actions. Analyzing the entry into prostitution as both an effect of power relations and of forces of desire thus requires acknowledging *both* the particular relations of power and domination that constituted the territorialization that one attempted to escape *and* the desire to become other - become 'independent', 'untouchable', 'one's own' - as what propelled one into prostitution. Such an analysis treats the structural and agentic aspects of entering into prostitution as intrinsically interrelated. Agency is not seen as unfettered but conditioned by material and discursive factors, by social locations and personal biographies.

Not all participants made sense of the entry into prostitution as a line of flight uprooting them from a particular territorialization, some rather spoke of it as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination. Their narratives also challenged the 'choice'/force' dichotomy. Rather than making sense of their entries into prostitution as a result of repressive power, being coerced or forced into prostitution, these participants spoke of how having been constituted as particular subjects, as 'sexual beings for others', had normalized the sexual use of one's body through the appropriation by others and made prostitution appear as a viable option. The entry into prostitution did thus not mark a rupture in their narratives but rather a continuum as these participants made connections between patriarchal ideas about (fe)male sexuality, male sexual privilege, previous experiences of objectification and sexual abuse and their entry into prostitution.

The participants' beginning stories speak of how the dispositif of prostitution intersect with the dispositif of gender and other dispositifs of social inequality. These stories paint a picture of a web of work fare politics, a general tightening of eligibility for public assistance, falling sick, lost jobs, neo-liberal discourse on 'personal responsibility' and the individualization and depoliticization of social problems, patriarchal discourse on (fe)male sexuality, sexual abuse and the categorization of women in deserving and underserving victims. The stories weave together a range of forces that shaped the participants' entries into prostitution. Connections are made between earlier experiences, particular situations and structural forces circumscribing action space, these factors interacted in different ways in the different participants' stories. As Scouler (2004a) contends, prostitution, as it currently operates, feeds on social inequality. Most of the participants spoke of the entry into prostitution as a means to a different end.

When the entry into prostitution is perceived as the only means to a different end, it is victimizing because it is overdetermined, this while it simultaneously is an act of agency (Showden, 2011).

### The dispositif of prostitution and the production of difference

No matter if the participants made sense of the entry into prostitution as a line of flight or as a further entanglement in relations of power and domination, entering into prostitution inevitably entailed being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution, and thereby entering into new relations of power/resistance.

One of the main ways power operates in the dispositif of prostitution is through the production of difference, the construction of women involved in prostitution as particular subjects - as 'prostitutes'. The production of difference differentiates women involved in prostitution from other women and stigmatizes and marginalizes them. As the participants' narratives have revealed this impinges on one's identity and entail both physical and emotional risk.

Space/place configurations are central to the production of difference in the dispositif of prostitution. In Chapter Eight I discussed how prostitution, while often viewed as a marginal phenomenon, has had a central position in the gendering and sexualization of public and private space. 'The prostitute' was historically symbolically important in the construction of 'respectable feminine sexuality'. Women involved in prostitution were constructed as 'public women' and the sex of prostitution was constructed as contractual and instrumental, juxtaposed to the relational, intimate sexuality of the private sphere. 'The prostitute' was in spatialized discourse differentiated from other women and placed outside femininity, in opposition to the moral values of heteronormality. Norms regarding respectable femininity was used as a means to control women's sexuality and to order their bodies in space.

The production of difference of the dispositif of prostitution is still largely tied to space. Most of the imagery of prostitution is related to particular spaces - 'dodgy back streets', 'busy red light districts' and 'upscale brothels'. Ideas about the status of persons with experience of prostitution are produced and reproduced through discourses, representations and practices that are articulated differently across space. 'The prostitute' is first and foremost constructed as a 'public woman', a 'woman of the street'. This leads to that the stigma and its consequences are particularly severe for women involved in street prostitution.

The dispositif of prostitution is an assemblage of constantly changing forces that respond to the conditions of the present. Neo-liberal market policies of stimulating business, deregulating markets and commodifying social life have opened up new possibilities for the expansion of the sex industry. While the street space is overloaded with meaning and closely tied to the othering of 'the prostitute', the relocation of prostitution from the streets to the internet has entailed a new space in which prostitution's deviant status has been challenged, thereby extending the reach of the sex industry. Sexual commerce, formerly located in the margins of society, has been mainstreamed. Internet and the success of e-commerce have increased the cultural visibility of the sex industry. This mainstreaming has entailed the creation of 'clean and shiny' urban spaces in which prostitution has been reconstructed within the parameters of heterosexual romance relationships (Bernstein, 2001, p. 411). As the public/private has been reconfigured, new practices of prostitution that emulate a 'private relationship' and aim to give the impression of a mutual exchange of sexual intimacy, have emerged. Challenging the division between the public/private and commerce/intimacy, what is purchased within prostitution is no longer primarily made sense of as instrumental, contractual touch but also expressions of bodily and emotional intimacy.

The participants' narratives spoke of how while all women involved in prostitution are subjected to the production of difference of the dispositif of prostitution, not all are equally burdened by the whore stigma. Those whose prostitution practice most closely resembles non-commercial sexuality generally occupy a place of higher status than those engaged in less mystified forms of prostitution. By positioning themselves against 'the (street) prostitute' and by attempting to integrate, what Bernstein (2007) refers to as, 'an ethos of bodily pleasure, authenticity and intimacy' in their prostitution practice, some of the participants involved in indoor prostitution avoided to inscribe their prostitution practice as the stigmatized notion of the contractual, instrumental touch. Prostitution practices entailing a blurring between 'the public instrumental touch' and 'the private intimate touch' may in that sense be seen as both a result of the mainstreaming and gentrification of the sex industry and as a technology of resistance employed by individual women. By challenging the idea of relationships within prostitution as contractual, instrumental and devoid of emotion through inscribing their experience within the parameters of conventional heterosexual romance relationships, these women also challenged their status as different – as outside of heteronormality.

## The dispositif of prostitution and the commodification of bodies

While the relocation of prostitution from the street space to online spaces has entailed the emergence of new meaning and new practices, the participants' narratives suggested that online space contains an interplay between smoothing and striating forces. It is both a space in which prostitution escapes the restrictions and boundaries of the largely striated space of street prostitution and a space shaped by the striating market forces and heteronormativity of the sex industry.

In the dispositif of prostitution, power operates not only through the production of difference but also through the commodification of bodies.

The sexualization and commodification of bodies is inherent to the sex industry. Heterosexual prostitution involves commercialized access to women's bodies and is premised by the presence of those bodies in 'hegemonic male fantasies' (Trautner, 2005, p. 772). The dispositif of prostitution is organized by particular cultural beliefs about gender and sexuality and produces certain gender performances. The participants' narratives spoke of how commodified gendered and sexualized norms acted as a striating force in the online space. In the sex industry, the ideal female body or idealized form of feminine sexuality is reified and become a matter of economic interests. Women involved in prostitution do gender in particular ways, based on assumptions about what clients like. As Shrage argues, the role of a consumer of any product/service carries with it a certain social authority and power (Shrage, 1994, p. 129). This authority and power places the provider of the product/service in a socially subordinate position. While the participants' narratives spoke of how the smoothing forces of the online space of prostitution allowed the participants to counter and talk back to stigmatizing discourses and ideas of them as 'body objects', ultimately many of them made sense of the interaction that took place in the online space as a part of 'the business'. 'The business' involved performing idealized forms of commodified feminine sexuality to attract clients. Gender and sexuality is thus continually constructed, performed and consumed in prostitution, often in ways that reinforce hegemonic heterosexuality.

## Power/resistance in the dispositif of prostitution

So far I have concluded that the dispositif of prostitution intersects with the dispositif of gender and other dispositifs of social inequality. Prostitution feeds on social inequality. I have also argued that power in the dispositif mainly operates through the production of difference and the commodification of bodies. Power was not uncontested. The narratives spoke of how both the production of difference and the commodification of bodies generated resistance.

In Chapter Nine, I further explored the way power operates in the dispositif by exploring the participants' narratives about resistance. Drawing on the participants' narratives I argued that women involved in prostitution have little chance to produce, organize and impose the space in which they operate. The dispositif of prostitution is, like society at large, structured by striating patriarchal and capitalist forces. The participants' narratives about managing emotion, violence and stigma spoke of how they, while they made sense of their involvement in prostitution in various ways, were unable to change the largely patriarchal cultural beliefs about gender and sexuality that organize the dispositif of prostitution. As Showden (2011) argues, women involved in prostitution do not have the power to make prostitution mean whatever they want it to mean. "*They have to operate within the norms and interpretative frameworks available even when they push the boundaries of those normative categories and interpretative structures*" (Showden, 2011, p. 155). Similarly, the striating market forces of the sex industry produced constraints on the participants' actions. The participants' narratives about managing emotion, violence and stigma spoke of how the participants adapted to, used and manipulated the space of prostitution by employing different tactics. The form their resistance took was conditioned by the power relations of the dispositif.

The production of difference of the dispositif of prostitution is, as suggested before, closely tied to the patriarchal construction of 'respectable feminine sexuality'. In patriarchal society women's moral innocence and purity is tied to their sexual innocence and purity (Shrage, 1994). The whore stigma is connected to overstepping the boundaries of 'respectable feminine sexuality'. Terms such as 'slut' and 'whore' are used to disrepute women for wearing 'revealing' clothing, being sexually assertive, or simply having sexual desires. Even though most of the participants rejected these ideas, their tactics to manage violence and manage stigma were conditioned by them. By engaging in prostitution, the participants risked being reterritorialized as 'undeserving victims/appropriate targets for violence'. The participants employed a multitude of tactics to avoid the gendered and classed sign of 'the prostitute' sticking to their bodies. I have already discussed how some of the participants avoided inscribing their prostitution practice as the stigmatized notion of contractual, instrumental touch by attempting to integrate an ethos of bodily pleasure, authenticity and intimacy in their prostitution practice. In exploring tactics to manage violence, I discussed how some participants attempted to dis-identify with the 'prostitute' by 'doing respectable feminine sexuality' and 'doing class'. Doing 'respectable feminine sexuality' could be made sense of as a practice of resistance, by resisting certain

meanings being ascribed to their bodies the participants attempted to avoid the transformation of their bodies into objects of hate and thereby appropriate targets for violence. These tactics did not challenge but were rather conditioned by the idea of 'respectable feminine sexuality' and the idea of some women being undeserving victims because of their sexual practices.

Apart from resisting the production of difference, the participants also resisted the commodification of their bodies. Being reterritorialized in the dispositive of prostitution, entailed being reterritorialized as a commodified body. Most of the participants employed a range of different symbolical, physical and psychological distancing tactics, attempting to maintain a sense of self distinct from that involved in business arrangements. These participants attempted to protect themselves from psychological distress and emotional harm by creating a separate prostitution identity and performing emotional labor, in the form of surface acting (displaying certain emotions to attract and maintain relationships with clients). Other participants resisted the commodification of their bodies by engaging emotionally and sexually with the clients. Through deep acting tactics (evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing feeling in oneself) they attempted to derive sexual pleasure from the sexual interaction and thereby resisted being constituted as passive sexual objects, or commodities.

As discussed in the previous section, the gender performances that the dispositive of prostitution produces are conditioned by the striating market forces and heteronormativity of the sex industry. These forces largely reproduce and capitalize on constricting and repressive norms of femininity and female sexuality. As Scoular concludes, even though heterosexual prostitution with female sellers and male buyers might be seen as challenging heterosexist married monogamy, it largely reinforces dominant norms central to the construction of femininity (Scoular, 2004b, p. 348). There are deep-rooted cultural notions about gender according to which women are expected to be available to fulfill men's sexual needs and desires. Central to women's involvement in prostitution, is to offer men sexual satisfaction as well as enhancing their emotional well-being through providing emotional support and validation. In order to do this, the participants had to conceal unwanted feelings and not primarily act on personal desires and preferences but rather embody the client's fantasies. For most participants this entailed engaging in emotional labor. Hochschild (1983) argues that emotion work is gendered. Actions that are concerned with the enhancement of others' emotional well-being and with providing emotional support such as

offering encouragement and validation, showing appreciation, listening closely to what someone has to say, and expressing empathy with another person's feelings are central to the construction of femininity (Erickson, 2005). Women have been held accountable for the performance of emotion as they have been expected to be the emotional care taker. Being a 'good girl' entails to put other people's feelings ahead of your own. As the participants suppressed their own feelings in order to care for the clients' emotional and sexual needs, these norms were reproduced. While these were tactics to manage emotion, on another plane they could be understood as reaffirming the dominant social status of men over the subordinated social status of women.

These examples show how resistance within the dispositif of prostitution is conditioned by the striating forces of patriarchy and capitalism. The participants engaged in everyday practices of resistance, they adapted to, used and manipulated the space of prostitution. However, even if these practices could create pockets of freedom they were conditioned by the dispositif and were unable to change 'the game plan'.

### The dispositif of prostitution and emotional distress, violence and discrimination

The participants' narratives speak of how the dispositif of prostitution, the way it currently operates, produces emotional distress, immediate risk of violence and discrimination.

The dispositif of prostitution constitutes a vast assemblage of competing and contradictory forces which define, order and regulate people involved in it. The recognition of the emotional distress and violence that many women experience in prostitution, did, in Sweden in the late seventies/early eighties, lead to the framing of prostitution as a structural problem and a form of patriarchal oppression of women. This discourse was institutionalized, first through social policy and later through the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services. After the enactment of the sex purchase act, prostitution was in popular and political discourse further framed as a form of men's violence against women. In the dominant discourse, 'the prostitute' has been constructed as a victim in need of protection and the state has been constructed as a benevolent rescuer of women involved in prostitution. However, as the participants' narratives have revealed, the dispositif of prostitution is constituted by a polyvalence of discourses that overlap and interact. Throughout Swedish history, women involved in

prostitution have been stigmatized, shamed, placed outside the protection of the law, pathologized, sterilized, incarcerated, et cetera. Ahmed argues that emotions not only move sideways, through the 'sticky associations' between signs and bodies, but also forwards and backwards in time, as she states "*repression always leaves its traces in the present – hence what sticks is bound up with the absent presence of historicity*" (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 44). The absent presence of historicity entails that 'the prostitute' still evoke feelings of hostility, disgust, hatred, pity or excitement in some, no matter if the idea to which these feelings was first connected is absent in the present, the feelings remain. This entails that when the prostitute sign sticks it can lead to a range of different consequences. While the institutionalized discourse stipulates that women involved in prostitution are 'victims in need of protection', the participants' narratives spoke of how if 'the prostitute' sign stuck to one's body it might just as well entail that one was transformed into an 'appropriate target for violence'/undeserving victim. The women of this study bore witness of severe violations and injustices. They spoke of threats, violence and rape. They also spoke of being constructed as undeserving victims in contacts with both the police and the court system. Moreover, their narratives revealed how not adhering to the construction of 'the prostitute' as 'passive victim, passive body' entailed the risk of being transformed to a guilty transgressor/'whore'. Claiming self-determination and refuting being a 'victim' could lead to losing deserving victim status and ideological sympathy.

Even though the participants employed a multitude of tactics in order to negotiate, resist and destabilize power and domination, their narratives revealed how the dispositif of prostitution produced both emotional and physical risks. Some of the participants were better equipped than others to manage these risks. As discussed in Chapter Eight, it has been argued that women's experiences of prostitution first and foremost are divided along lines of prostitution sectors. Even though there is research that indicate that women involved in street prostitution generally are subjected to greater physical risks than women involved in indoor prostitution, suggesting that indoor prostitution is inherently less dangerous than street prostitution is highly debatable and depends on a variety of factors. The participants' narratives indicate that how one is able to manage the risks of prostitution is not primarily a matter of one's spatial location but rather one's social location and personal biography.

Clearly, being reterritorialized in the dispositif of prostitution, as it currently operates, entails severe risk. Two of the research participants have passed away,

both prematurely, one as a result of severe health problems and the other as a murder victim. These tragic deaths point to the sometimes lethal effects of the dispositif of prostitution. There is an assumption that prostitution could be rendered harmless simply through its reform and regulation as a form of work. This type of reasoning fails to take into account how the whore stigma operates as a facilitator for patriarchy. It treats prostitution as a marginalized phenomenon rather than a phenomenon that occupy a central position in our gendered culture. Slut-shaming, victim-blaming and rape culture clearly show how the whore stigma is applied to women who are not involved in prostitution. As you might remember, Ahmed asks the question of how we might understand that some signs of hate are repeated. She answers by stating that it is because they are the effects of ‘histories that have stayed open’ (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 59). The sign ‘the prostitute’ is an effect of a history that has stayed open. I argue that as long as ‘the whore/prostitute’ operates as a facilitator of patriarchy in the governing of female sexuality, the stigma attached to women involved in prostitution will perpetuate.

Moreover, rather than equating prostitution to work the participants spoke of how prostitution differed from other work. Many of the participants spoke of the importance of not having to depend on prostitution to get by, since that would entail that one was ‘forced’ to sell sex. These participants spoke of being able to choose how often, when and to whom to sell sex as critical to their emotional wellbeing. They spoke of approaching prostitution as work as involving major emotional risk, as it would require the display of certain emotions regardless of whether they were congruent with the way they felt or not.

### Exiting the dispositif of prostitution

The participants’ narratives about everyday practices of resistance conveyed not only the relationship between power and resistance, but also how power relations at times were congealed into states of domination. Some of the participants’ narratives spoke of how lines of flight turned into lines of destruction when they were cut short by effects of the production of difference and the commodification of bodies. Reterritorialized in relations of power and domination, these participants eventually followed new lines of flight, exiting prostitution. However, the participants’ narratives about exiting spoke of how leaving prostitution was far from uncomplicated. As discussed in Chapter Ten, the dispositif of prostitution intersects with dispositifs of social inequality and the dispositif of consumer capitalism in creating trapping factors, factors that serve as barriers to

exiting prostitution. The trapping factors that the dispositif produced were both material barriers and identity related barriers. The structural disadvantages that compelled some to enter into prostitution: poverty, disability, lack of resources, education and other employment options, served as powerful trapping factors. Even if many of the participants made sense of prostitution as an attempt to achieve economic stability, it often led to economic marginalization. Most of the participants only had access to the minimum level of basic social security which left them in a vulnerable position. Negative experiences with authorities had many of the participants conclude that they were placed outside the protection of the system and thereby had to rely on themselves to get by.

The participants' narratives also spoke of how, even if there were a desire to exit prostitution and the material possibilities were there, identity related issues could still serve as powerful trapping factors. In Chapter Five, I spoke of how the regulationist practice of registering, monitoring and controlling women involved in prostitution was what ultimately came to separate 'the prostitute' from other (working class) women, and what brought about professionalized prostitution. Prior to the regulation and the constitution of 'the prostitute' as an object of inquiry, women were able to move in and out of prostitution without being categorized and stigmatized as 'prostitutes' to the same extent. The regulation system made it impossible for women to have their name removed once they were registered as 'prostitutes' unless they got married or left the district. Even though women are not literally registered as 'prostitutes', the participants who had exited prostitution spoke of how constraining and problem saturated dominant narratives about who or what one had been, were and therefore could become served as a real hindrance to exiting prostitution.

## **11.2 What have the dialogue resulted in?**

As I stated in the beginning, this thesis grew from my desire to produce a discursive space in which the complexities and contradictions of prostitution could be explored. In the thesis I have created a space in which different narratives about prostitution can coexist and enter into dialogue with each other rather than to subjugate each other.

Instead of pre-theorizing prostitution I have explored how the participants made sense of their experiences and how they did this in dialogue with dominant narratives about prostitution. The participants' narratives were not treated as a direct reflection of an experiential reality, but were theorized as both technologies

of power and technologies of the self. This stipulates that although subjects live and construct stories about themselves, these stories also live and construct subjects. I have explored how power intervenes in creating conditions of possibility for specific narratives to emerge as dominant and for others to become marginalized. I have explored the materiality of narratives - how discourses produce experiences and subject positions. I have also explored how the participants, through their narratives, construct their identities and make sense of their experiences and their lives; how they narrate themselves as ethical subjects and untangle themselves from stigmatizing narratives of who one is as a 'prostitute'.

The participants' narratives revealed how prostitution was made sense of differently by different people, and importantly, by the same person over time. Several of the participants narrated different stories about the same experiences as our relationship grew, or as they had experiences that created a demand for new causality to be created. How one made sense of prostitution, depended on many different things but was always conditioned by the present in which the story was told.

By talking back to the dominant narratives that had scripted them as particular kinds of subjects, the participants created counter-narratives. I have viewed these narratives as technologies of resistance – "*the subjective capacities developed in the attempt to resist the power that makes women what they are*" (Tamboukou, 2000). The analysis of narratives and counter-narratives has shown how different narratives were related to each other. In Chapter Seven, I discussed how narratives about 'the prostitute' as 'passive body, passive victim' generated counter-narratives in which prostitution was made sense of as a 'free choice'. In these narratives, a capable, controlled and rational self emerged and stories of vulnerability, victimization and loss of control were avoided. These narratives made connections with both the radical feminist construction of 'the prostitute' as 'the victim of patriarchy par excellence' and the neo liberal construction of 'the victim' as identity category - 'the victim' as passive, disempowered, weak and dependent. I also discussed how narratives about 'the prostitute' as 'a whore'/'undeserving victim' generated counter-narratives about victimization, about sexual violence and its consequences. In these narratives, agency was often omitted, as it may have threatened one's status as deserving victim. Lastly, while narratives about 'the prostitute' as sexually indiscriminatory, 'dirty' and vulgar generated counter-narratives that reproduced repressive ideas about 'respectable feminine sexuality', narratives about prostitution as contractual, instrumental

and devoid of emotion generated counter-narratives in which prostitution was inscribed within the parameters of conventional heterosexual romance relationships. As prostitution was made sense of as a 'hobby' or as something approached with an ethos of bodily pleasure, authenticity and intimacy, these narratives challenged the status of prostitution as deviant, as outside of heteronormality.

So what may we learn from this multitude of narratives and counter-narratives? What does this dialogue result in?

Firstly, what may have appeared as incoherence or contradictions (for example, participants who refuted to be constructed as victims despite telling stories of having been victimized, or participants who employed sex work discourse but did not equate prostitution with work et cetera.), does, when one listens closely, rather appear as different layers of meaning or effects of deep inner work.

Secondly, no matter from which position the participants narrated or how they made sense of prostitution, it appears as if what was at stake in narrating their experiences was to untangle the self from narratives about 'the prostitute' - to narrate one's singularity. Most of the women stated that they wanted to participate in the study to challenge dominant narratives about prostitution and 'the prostitute'. This, no matter whether they were speaking from a sex workers' rights position or from a survivor of prostitution position. I believe that this desire expresses something significant. No matter whether one is othered as a 'victim of patriarchy' or as 'whore', it impinges on one's singularity and thereby threatens one's humanity. By narrating themselves and their experiences, the participants ceased to be mere paradigm and metaphor and came forth as unique existences.

Cavarero (2000) argues that it is not the content of the story that makes us desire our stories to be told, but rather the idea that the story expresses our individual uniqueness. In a TED talk, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) speaks of 'the danger of a single story'. She argues that "*stories matter, many stories matter*". A single story always creates stereotypes, no matter if it is a story about a person, a people or a place. She goes onto saying that "*The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.*" Some single stories might appear as more harmful than others. Clearly, many stereotypes about 'the prostitute' have no truth to them. The story of the prostitute as a 'whore' and therefore an

‘appropriate target for violence’/undeserving victim is such a story. However, when victimization becomes the single story about women in prostitution it is, if not equally dangerous, equally problematic. No matter if women involved in prostitution are constructed and treated as ‘victims who do not know their own good’, ‘happy hookers’ or ‘dirty whores’, it *is* equally problematic. Even if the consequences are very different, the dynamic is the same. The production of difference is the foundation for every act of denial of their equal humanity.

Ngozi Adichie argues that a single story makes the recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different, not how we are similar. As I stated in Chapter Four, I have a both/and approach to difference (Bradley, 1996). I consider differences to be fluid, shifting and discursive as well as enduring and embodied (Archer, 2004, p. 461). Women with prostitution experience are both constructed as ‘different’, and consequently have ‘different’ experiences. I argue that the challenge is to speak about prostitution in a way that both allows a deconstruction of difference and make visible the effects of constructed difference.

While single stories have been used to categorize and stigmatize, many stories can be used to humanize.

### **11.3 Further research**

Although this is the final chapter of the thesis, it does not mark the definite end of this narrative, but possibly a new beginning. As I set out on this project, rather than focusing on one particular aspect of prostitution experience, I wanted to follow the participants’ down their trails (Riessman, 2008, p. 24). This approach created a rich and unruly material, full of stories about prostitution experience. In the four chapters of the analysis, I have engaged with the participants’ narratives about entering into prostitution, the spatiality of prostitution experience, tactics to manage emotion, violence and stigma as well as narratives about exiting prostitution. Each of these chapters leaves loose threads and possibilities for further research.

The dispositif of this study is a product of the narratives of women involved in prostitution. It is thus, more precisely, a sketch of the dispositif of heterosexual prostitution, with female sellers and male buyers. Considering that I have only drawn on the narratives of women, I am afraid that the other party of the prostitution transaction remains a shadowy figure in the dispositif of prostitution that I have sketched. To address this would entail an exploration of men’s

narratives about purchasing sex, an exploration of the different ways that they make sense of their involvement in prostitution, their position in the dispositif, and how their narratives are entangled with and positioned against the idea of 'the client'. Such a study would make the sketch of the dispositif fuller and allow for a richer narrative about prostitution.

Viewing prostitution as a dispositif entails treating it as an institution rather than as delimited to the two parties of the prostitution transaction. The focus of this study was to explore the dispositif of prostitution from the vantage point of women involved in prostitution. The participants' narratives challenged individualized and decontextualized explanations of people's experiences of prostitution. In the participants' narratives, connections were made between multiple discourses, practices, institutions, policies and laws. It was this combination of factors which made possible, sustained and reproduced particular forms of prostitution and particular ways of making sense of prostitution experience. The participants' narratives spoke of the many parties central to the way the dispositif operates: researchers, journalists and activists - agents central to the production of truth about prostitution; politicians, attorneys, police and social workers - agents central to the regulation and governing of prostitution, and; the people who directly capitalize on others involvement in prostitution - pimps and other agents of the sex industry. A conceptualization of prostitution that only focuses on the two parties of the prostitution transaction is therefore flawed, and importantly in order to allow for the social and political change that would better the lives of women involved in prostitution, we need studies about how society responds to and addresses the injustices and violence that the women of this study narrate about.

# POPULÄRVETENSKAPLIG SAMMANFATTNING

Prostitution som fenomen befinner sig i ett spänningsfält av konkurrerande förståelser. I prostitutionsdebatten definieras prostitution som allt från ett arbete till en form av mäns våld mot kvinnor. Dominerande samtida diskurser om prostitution är centrerade kring en rad binära konstruktioner såsom aktör/struktur, frivillighet/tvång och makt/maktlöshet. Dessa diskurser skapar begränsningar för vad vi kan säga och förstå om prostitution. Genom att fokusera antingen på aktörskap eller på maktstrukturer osynliggörs prostitutionens mångfald och komplexiteten i människors prostitutionserfarenheter.

Utgångspunkten för den här avhandlingen var att skifta fokus från *vad prostitution är* (arbete eller våld, bemäktigande eller exploatering), det som vanligen är ämne för debatt, till *hur prostitution fungerar*; hur olika diskurser, praktiker och maktrelationer samspelar i att göra vissa former av prostitution, och vissa sätt att skapa mening i prostitutionserfarenheter, möjliga. Snarare än att fokusera på *antingen* strukturer *eller* aktörskap var syftet att undersöka hur prostitutionserfarenheten präglas av *både* makt *och* motstånd.

Avhandlingen bygger på narrativa intervjuer med tjugo kvinnor med prostitutionserfarenhet. Till skillnad från de dominerande berättelser som prostitutionsdebatten utgör så rymmer dessa berättelser den komplexitet och de motsättningar som prostitutionserfarenheten ofta innehar. I syfte att skapa ett diskursivt rum i vilket olika berättelser om prostitutionserfarenheter kunde samexistera och komma i dialog med varandra rekryterades forskningsdeltagare med olika bakgrunder, från olika prostitutionsarenor och med olika lång erfarenhet av prostitution.

Med en förståelse av språket som en central del av konstruktionen av den sociala verkligheten, snarare än som ett neutralt medel med hjälp av vilket en tänkt objektiv verklighet beskrivs, betraktas forskningsdeltagarnas berättelser som ett medel att skapa mening i prostitutionserfarenheter istället för en direkt avspegling av dessa erfarenheter. Avhandlingen präglas av ett intresse, inte bara för berättelsernas innehåll, utan även för berättandet som sådant. Frågor som: Hur skiftar berättelser om prostitution beroende på tid, rum och relation till den som de berättas för? och; Hur är personliga berättelser om prostitution relaterade till de dominerande berättelser om prostitution som existerar i samhället? är centrala i avhandlingen.

Forskningsdeltagarnas berättelser om inträdet i prostitution utmanade synen på prostitution som antingen ett fritt val eller ett resultat av tvång. De flesta forskningsdeltagarna beskrev inträdet i prostitution som både en motståndshandling och som ett resultat av tvingande yttre omständigheter. Deras berättelser handlade om en längtan efter ett annat liv och utsagor om de materiella och sociala omständigheter som gjorde att prostitutionen kom att framstå som ett alternativ. Andra forskningsdeltagare beskrev inträdet i prostitution som en ytterligare insnärjning i relationer av makt och dominans, snarare än en motståndshandling. Dessa forskningsdeltagare förstod inträdet i prostitution som ett resultat av tidigare sexualisering, objektifiering och sexuella övergrepp, sådana erfarenheter medförde att prostitution framstod som ett alternativ. Inträdet i prostitution utgjorde inte ett brott i deras livsberättelser utan snarare en kontinuitet.

Forskningsdeltagarnas berättelser skapar en bild av komplexa relationer av makt, dominans och motstånd. Oavsett hur deltagarna skapade mening i inträdet i prostitutionen så innebar det ett inträde i nya relationer av makt och motstånd. Berättelserna visade hur institutionen prostitution är präglad av ett samspel mellan olika strukturer av social ojämlikhet. Prostitutionen beskrevs som både möjliggörande och hindrande. Berättelserna präglades av paradoxen att prostitutionen, samtidigt som den sågs som en väg till självständighet och/eller ekonomisk trygghet, för många ledde till stigmatisering, diskriminering och social utsatthet.

Forskningsdeltagarnas berättelser talade om hur kvinnor, när de träder in i prostitution, blir konstruerade som 'prostituerade' och därmed insnärjda i en rad berättelser om 'den prostituerade'. Genom att berätta motberättelser

– berättelser som antingen implicit eller explicit utgör ett motstånd mot dominerande berättelser om prostitution och 'den prostituerade' – utmanade forskningsdeltagarna stereotypa föreställningar om kvinnor i prostitution.

Annangörandet av kvinnor i prostitution har knutits till gaturummet. Kvinnor i prostitution har konstruerats som 'offentliga kvinnor' och sexualiteten i prostitutionen har konstruerats som kontraktsbunden och instrumentell, motsatt den relationella, intima sexualiteten i den privata sfären. Under senare år har prostitutionsmarknaden genomgått stora förändringar. Prostitution har till stor del omlokaliseras från gatan till internet och inomhusmiljöer. Mainstreaming och normaliseringen av kommersiellt sex har lett till att prostitutionen har blivit omkonstruerad inom parametrarna för heterosexuella romantiska relationer. Nya praktiker såsom Girl Friend Experience emulerar privata relationer och syftar att ge en känsla av ömsesidig attraktion och intimitet.

Medan gatuarenan är laddad med mening och nära förknippad med annangörandet av kvinnor i prostitution, så har internet medfört ett nytt rum för ett nytt subjekt att träda fram. De forskningsdeltagare som var verksamma i inomhusprostitution konstruerade gatan som en farlig plats och positionerade sig emot 'den (gatu)prostituerade' och placerade därmed prostitutionsstigmat någon annanstans. Prostitution online utgör både ett rum i vilket prostitutionen undkommer de restriktioner och begränsningar som gatuarenan medför och ett rum som präglas av heteronormativitet och marknadskrafter. Även om online-rummet möjliggjorde att forskningsdeltagarna kunde utmana stereotypa föreställningar om vilka de var som 'prostituerade' så är sexualiseringen och kommodifieringen av kroppar inneboende i prostitutionen som sådan. Forskningsdeltagarna talade om hur de gjorde idealiserad kommodifierad feminitet för att attrahera och behålla kunder. Deras berättelser visade på hur kön och sexualitet kontinuerligt konstrueras, framställs, och konsumeras i prostitutionen, ofta på ett sätt som förstärker hegemonisk heterosexualitet.

Medan alla forskningsdeltagarna kämpade med det sociala stigmat så var inte alla lika hårt drabbade av horstigmat. De personer vars prostitutionspraktik mest liknade icke-kommersiella relationer hade generellt sett en högre status än de som var involverade i mindre mystifierade former av prostitution. Vissa av forskningsdeltagarna försökte att integrera ett etos av fysisk njutning, autencitet och intimitet i sin prostitutionspraktik och undvek därmed att skriva in sin prostitutionspraktik som den stigmatiserade, kontraktbaserade instrumentella

sexualitet som traditionellt förknippats med prostitutionen. Detta kan ses som både ett sätt att göra motstånd mot stigmat och ett resultat av mainstreaming och gentrifiering av sexindustrin.

Forskningsdeltagarnas berättelser visade att även om prostitutionserfarenheter varierar mellan olika arenor så varierar de också mellan olika personer på dessa arenor. En arena kan innehålla många olika rum och beroende på hur man är positionerad på arenan och beroende på ens tidigare erfarenheter kan prostitutionen ta sig vitt skilda uttryck. Att skapa en binär konstruktion i vilken utomhusprostitution beskrivs som farlig och inomhusprostitution som säker är problematiskt. De flesta av de forskningsdeltagare som sålde sex inomhus var verksamma som 'självständiga eskorter' och träffade kunder antingen i privata lägenheter eller på hotell. Detta innebar att de befann sig i säkerhetsmässigt utsatta situationer, liknande de som forskningsdeltagarna som sålde sex på gatan befann sig i.

Forskningsdeltagarna berättade om en rad olika taktiker för att förhandla om, göra motstånd mot och destabilisera makt. Att träda in i prostitution innebar att man var tvungen att förhålla sig till att bli positionerad som en 'kommodifierad kropp', ett 'ovärdigt offer/någon som förtjänar att utsättas för våld' och en 'stigmatiserad identitet'. Prostitutionen medförde därmed emotionella, fysiska och sociala risker. Berättelserna talade om hur 'den prostituerade' inte har en given innebörd. En mängd olika meningar tillskrevs forskningsdeltagarnas kroppar. Många av dem berättade om erfarenheter av våld och hot, och om diskriminering både i kontakt med polis, rättsväsende och andra myndigheter. Eftersom forskningsdeltagarna i liten utsträckning kunde påverka prostitutionens förutsättningar så anpassade de sig, använde och manipulerade prostitutionsrummet i syfte att förhandla, motstå och destabilisera makt. Även om alla beskrev de risker som prostitutionen medförde så hade de olika möjlighet att göra motstånd. De forskningsdeltagare som var mest utsatta var de som inte hade möjlighet att styra över sin prostitutionspraktik och/eller som hade svårt att sätta gränser och styra över interaktionen med kunder.

För de flesta av forskningsdeltagarna medförde inträdet i prostitution negativa konsekvenser i form av stigmatisering, våld och/eller känslomässig skada. Vissa av deltagarna hade lämnat prostitutionen, ytterligare andra uttryckte en önskan om att lämna. Deras berättelser visade hur institutionen prostitution skapade kvarhållande faktorer som försvårade utträdet. Det berättades om materiella,

sociala såväl som känslomässiga hinder för att lämna. Att lämna prostitution var, för de flesta av deltagarna, en process. De deltagare som hade lämnat prostitutionen talade om hur exitprocessen var beroende av sammanlänkade strukturella, relationella och individuella faktorer. Att skapa en ny berättelse om sig själv – om vem man hade varit, var och därför kunde bli - beskrevs som centralt. Vissa beskrev uppbrottet som ett gradvis utfasande, andra som ett resultat av en viss händelse. Gemensamt för dessa berättelser var att närvaron av andra möjligheter var avgörande. Huruvida personen uppfattade dessa möjligheter som ett reellt alternativ byggde ofta på en förändrad förståelse för sig själv och sina erfarenheter. Samtliga berättelser om att lämna prostitutionen innehöll händelser eller erfarenheter som hade lett till en annan självuppfattning. Att skapa en ny berättelse om sina erfarenheter och sig själv var centralt i processen att lämna prostitution. Skapandet av denna berättelse innefattade ett utforskande av hur man hade blivit tillskriven viss mening och hur man hade fått en viss självbild. Att utmana begränsande eller förtryckande berättelser om vem man var medförde nya tolkningar av det förflutna, nuet och framtiden.

Forskningsdeltagarnas berättelser utmanade dominerande berättelser om kvinnor med prostitutionserfarenhet. De synliggjorde den könade och politiska karaktären av deras liv och utmanade individualiserade och dekontextualiserade förståelser av prostitution. Deras berättelser visade också hur det som stod på spel i berättandet var att berätta om sina prostitutionserfarenheter på ett sätt som möjliggjorde att man kunde framträda som en unik individ och utmana stereotypa föreställningar om 'den prostituerade'.



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## Appendix 1

Dear X,

I hope that it's okay that I email you on this address. My name is Anna Hulusjö, I'm a social worker and PhD candidate from Malmö University. I'm currently working on a project about women's narratives about prostitution/sex work experience. Before I started working on this project I worked for three years at the Prostitution Unit in Gothenburg, doing outreach work and providing counselling services.

I'm interested in people's own stories and experiences of selling sex and would like to achieve an as broad representation of experiences as possible in order to, in my study, create a nuanced and complex image of prostitution/sex work. I wonder whether you might be interested in meeting me for an interview? If you are interested in participating you are of course guaranteed full anonymity.

Please call or email me if you would like to know more about me, the study or the interview.

Warm wishes,

Anna

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview guide**

#### **Life situation**

Background, family situation, housing, health

Source of income

Social network

#### **Entry into prostitution**

First experience of prostitution

Introduction to the prostitution market

Thoughts on the first time

#### **The structure of the prostitution market - sectors**

Differences between sectors

Mobility between sectors

Population - different sectors

Organization - different sectors

Experience from different sectors

Experience of operating independently

Experience of being procured

#### **Experiences of prostitution**

Thoughts on selling sex

Thoughts on people who buy sex and relationships to them

Thoughts on people who sell sex and relationships to them

Experiences of and thoughts on others views on prostitution

Risk management strategies

Vulnerability

Experiences of threats and violence

#### **Experiences of support**

Experiences of contact with authorities and NGOs

Other experiences of support

Need of support?

#### **Exiting prostitution**

Thoughts on leaving

Experiences of wanting to leave

Experiences of leaving – possibilities and difficulties

#### **Future**

Future plans/dreams

Possibilities and difficulties

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