

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Raquel Rosario Sanchez for the degree of Master of Arts in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies presented on December 6, 2016.

Title: The Construction of Masculinity in the Online Communities Where Men Talk About Their Experiences as Buyers in the Sex Trade.

Abstract approved:

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This thesis on online communities for sex buyers seeks to understand questions such as “what can we learn from online communities for sex buyers?” and “what can we learn about the way sex buyers relate to women both in and outside of prostitution?” We explore these issues with the framework of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and through the use of qualitative research of both the review boards at Punternet and the online community forums at UKPunting. Both communities are located in England, where online communities for sex buyer originated. By reading the conversations of sex buyers, we can gather that what the men who pay for sex and write in these online communities are seeking, apart from sexual access to women’s bodies, is a commodified version of women that can be controlled in a manner that the evermore egalitarian roles of men and women in society does not allow outside of the sex industry. Particularly, we discover the desire of most sex buyers to demand something I

called 'agentic complacency' from women in prostitution. Meaning that sex buyers in the review boards and online communities used for this research are interested in the performance of sexual empowerment and enthusiastic consent as long as it can be controlled by sex buyers themselves and it caters to their male privilege and entitlement. The online features and peculiarities of the communities work in tandem with other aspects of the sex industry (such as the agencies women work for) to optimize the sex buyers' experience and their 'male sex right'. Although highly informative, further research is needed, particularly at a transnational level, in order to better understand the reasoning and motivations of sex buyers worldwide under a patriarchal system.

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The Construction of Masculinity in the Online Communities Where Men Talk About  
Their Experiences as Buyers in the Sex Trade

by  
Raquel Rosario Sanchez

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Raquel Rosario Sanchez, Author

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I would like to state my sincere appreciation and utmost respect for all the girls and women who have shared their experiences of patriarchal oppression. This includes personal conversations between friends and family, advocacy work in shelters, experiences shared by students in my classroom, and published literature written by victims and survivors of patriarchal violence.

Thank you for telling me about your lives and sharing stories of struggle, compassion, healing and strength, including the many acts of resistance, however small, and for teaching me that sometimes the most courageous form of resistance against patriarchy is staying alive.

Thank you for helping me in this continual process of understanding how violence against girls and women works, how best to prevent it and how to fight against it together.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	
• Overview of the Subject Under Consideration.....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	
• Language and Terminology.....	10
• Online Communities as Support Groups for Sex Buyers.....	21
• Hegemonic Masculinity Literature.....	24
• Sex-buyers' Literature.....	34
• Romantic Partnerships and Sex Buyers.....	42
• Sex Buyers and Violence Against Women and Girls.....	45
• Feminist Rhetoric Being Hijacked to Support Toxic Masculinity in Sex Buyers.....	48
III. METHODOLOGY	
• Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis.....	55
• Understanding Online Communities for Sex Buyers.....	60
• Potential Bias.....	68
• Process.....	72
IV. ANALYSIS	
• Sex Buyers' Reaction to Support Services for Escorts.....	87
• Guides for Sex Buyers: Outsmarting the Women.....	91
• "Lesbianism" As Performance For Men.....	99
• Negotiating Consent.....	110
• The Rights and Responsibilities of Service Providers.....	113
• "I Paid For This!": When Entitled Men Don't Get What They Want.....	116
• "The Girlfriend Experience": Sex-buyer's Ideal Woman as a Service.....	119
• "Review your OH like a WG, not as a real human being with feeling": A Thread.....	125
• Ethnicity and Nationality as Commodities.....	131
• Human Trafficking for The Purposes of Sex: A Conversation Between Sex Buyers.....	135
• "She Was Being Mechanical": When Women Treat Prostitution Like Work.....	140

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
V. CONCLUSION	
• ‘Agentic Complacency’: No Dead Dolls But Also No Rejection.....	155
• “Why Do We Punt?”: Sex Buyer Reasoning.....	161
• Further Research.....	167
VI. GLOSSARY OF TERMS	
• Understanding the Language of Sex Buyers.....	169
• Queer Language, Binary Reviews.....	173
• “Sex work” Terminology in Online Communities.....	175
VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY	

## INTRODUCTION

- **Overview of the Subject Under Consideration**

Who are sex buyers? What role does the social construction of gender have in the rationale for buying sex? How do sex buyers conceptualize themselves? How do they conceptualize themselves in relation to the person selling sex? What do they think of the person participating with them? What do they think of fellow sex buyers?

In the sex industry, as well as in feminism as a social movement, much has been written about the role of the people engaging in what some call “selling” sex. To an extent, the debate and public dialogue has been reduced from a systems level analysis to an individual level decision, meaning that the decision to sell sex in the sex trade takes center stage, often decontextualized.

In 1979, Kathleen Barry published *Female Sexual Slavery* which illustrated how under a patriarchal system, women and girls were subjected to sexual exploitation as a class worldwide. This exploitation was systemic and wove together spheres that would have otherwise seemed dissimilar such as prostitution, incest, the mail order bride business, trafficking and rape. Barry defines female sexual slavery as “present in all situations where women or girls cannot change the immediate conditions of their existence; where regardless of how they got

into those conditions they cannot get out; and where they are subject to sexual violence and exploitation” (Barry, 139).

Compare this systems level analysis with the individual level analysis provided by Douglas Fox for *The Guardian* titled ‘Don’t Criminalize Our Clients’. He argues “it is disappointing that the government has chosen to ignore the legitimate rights and aspirations of sex workers by ignoring our calls that our human rights be recognized. It is our choice to become sex workers whether we are male, female or transgender” (Fox, 2008). Fox forgot to mention in his article that although he identifies as an occasional sex worker, he is in fact the owner of one of the largest brothels in Northern England, an agency named Christony Companions. The escorts at his agency are, unsurprisingly, all women.

This dichotomy between a gendered, class based analysis that frames the conversation around prostitution as a class struggle in which primarily women and girls are exploited versus an analysis that only centers the so-called ‘choice’ of people within the position to sell sex is legendary (Raymond, xxxvii). However, it is only recently that more attention has been paid to the other side of the equation. Recent decades and efforts have tried to shift the conversation to what makes a sex buyer. What drives them?

It is indicative of the current state of the women's rights movement (or feminist movement) that the U.S. centered debate has been reduced to a matter of 'choice'. Many have argued that this individualistic perspective on the movement, as well as debates within the movement, are a result of conscious efforts to de-radicalize what is meant to be a transformative movement (Murphy, 17). Choice is a concept that sprung from the reproductive rights movement as the rights of women and girls to be able to choose whether to carry a pregnancy or not became a central tenet of feminism. The concept of 'choice' within feminism expanded but it proved that, although useful for some battles, it wasn't meant to be universal for all. It spread to the point where the concept of 'choice' became a blanket statement for the movement. As Meghan Murphy writes in her essay for *Freedom Fallacy* this analysis of 'choice' is incomplete. She argues "of late, it has become standard to talk about 'choice' in terms of individual choice rather than collective choice (and collective freedom), as though 'my choice' could not possibly affect anyone in the world except me" (Murphy, 21).

After all, as long as feminists continue to debate back and forth about "choices" made by women, we will never have the time to actually question the choices of men, more specifically in the context of this thesis, the choices of men who chose to pay for sex.

As Janice Raymond explains in *Not A Choice, Not A Job*: “The emphasis on choice in the politics of prostitution has reduced prostitution to a question of a woman’s consent, sprung free from the context of male dominance and the commercial power of an international sex industry. Both forces are allowed to recede to the background because whether or not it is ‘her choice’ takes over the foreground” (Raymond, 20).

Personally, I find the ‘choice’ argument to be an entirely inadequate analysis based on my experience as an advocate in shelters for domestic violence and sexual abuse. People make lots of different choices within situations of exploitation either to survive or to get by. These choices do not negate the broader context in which they have to be made. But alas, the idea that ‘choice’, as Fox and countless other authors who support the sex trade argue, somehow negates conditions of exploitation also fails to take into account that violence, oppression and exploitation can be psychological and invisible. As Janice Raymond argues, ‘choice’ is in fact “a strategy of survival” for most women in prostitution, not the end of the debate.

Trisha Baptie, a Canadian journalist and survivor advocate who spent 15 years in prostitution, explains “women’s silence and consent can be bought- I remember how much mine cost... allowing a minority of women in prostitution to argue “choice” on the backs of the majority who

are out there, in a perfect storm of oppression, neglect, abuse and human trafficking” (Raymond, 19).

In the sex industry, in particular, we see a symbiotic relationship between capitalism and patriarchy that ultimately results in the mainstreaming of neoliberal ideals of the market to the detriment of the social status of women. For example, the book *Prostitution Narratives* edited by Caroline Norma and Melinda Tankard-Reist deliberately centers only the voices and experiences of women in so called ‘first-world countries’ or Global North countries because the editors wanted to first dismiss the idea that “sex industries of the rich, industrialized world were... ‘better’, more regulated and ‘safer’ systems of prostitution” and also because they wanted the reader to connect how the normalization of the sex industry in the Global North affects women and girls in the Global South both in their home countries but also as immigrants who sustain the sex trade in the Global North (Norma and Tankard-Reist, 16).

If we connect their analysis of how the normalization, and indeed, the glamorization of prostitution in Global North countries affects women and girls in Global South countries to the results of the largest empirical study done on the effects of the legalization of prostitution on human trafficking levels (Cho, Dreher and Neumayer, 2013), then we get a clear picture of how an individual level analysis is incomplete, at best ,and callous at worst.

Cho, Dreher and Neumayer used the economic theory of supply and demand and found in their study ‘Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?’ that “our empirical analysis for a cross-section of up to 150 countries shows that the scale effect dominates the substitution effect. On average, countries where prostitution is legal experience larger reported human trafficking inflows.” The analysis being that there are simply not enough women making the voluntary, “free choice” to enter prostitution, but once the trade becomes normalized, there is a demand side that needs to be met. This demand is then satisfied by luring working class women and girls from the Global South to the countries that have legalized prostitution with the promise of jobs and opportunity (Banyard, 168) (Raymond, xv).

If we were to use the terms of the free market, in which we have a supply side and a demand side for an industry to grow, then we can see that much of the literature, studies, analysis and popular media commentary has been focused on the supply side of the sex industry equation. It has only been recently that people have begun to shift focus to the demand side. Who is asking for these services? Who is driving the commodification of sex?

A central component of sex industry advocates is that the answer to these questions lies in those who sell sex themselves (Raymond, 10). In this mentality, we are to think that the sex industry as a whole has been

the result of grassroots efforts made by people who desperately want to sell sex, instead of being directly tied to the demand from more privileged people to buy sex. This difference in perspective is crucial because it spells out a key divergence in the way people, advocates for and against the sex industry, understand the nature of it.

Sex industry advocates and people who identify as sex workers use the narrative of choice and empowerment when it comes to the sex trade. This choice and empowerment argument centers those selling sex, services or “companionship” (choice of words may vary) and not the choice or empowerment of people to buy sex. For them, the questions begin and end with the people on the supply side and assumes that the sex industry exists in the first place to satisfy the desire of sellers of sex to express their sexuality and become entrepreneurs on their own right without the trappings of the law and state policy to interfere (Banyard, 153).

Conversely, people who identify as sex trade survivors or formerly prostituted and their supporters argue that the industry itself is tied directly to the subordination of women and girls worldwide, that without patriarchy there would be no prostitution as we know it and that the demand for sexual services and the commodification of the sexuality of women and girls by men is at the root of the industry.

In a clever twist on the language of choice, Spanish philosopher Laura Torres argues that the matter of choice is fundamental... to

understand sex buyers' motivations. She writes "The sex buyer has the time and money (indicators of power in society), they adopt a rational decision about what type of prostitution he will demand (newspaper ads, incalls or outcalls, street walkers...) and guides his action to access this decision. This decision-making process forces him to postpone his desire and discipline his conduct, adapting it, for example, to the time of the month when he gets paid, or the possibility of having an alibi for his partner or spouse (in fact, the demand for prostitution is higher in the mornings, when a sex buyer can raise least suspicion and hide his infidelity" (de Miguel, 176).

Having spent over a year examining and studying the words and the ideas of the people who make up the demand side of the sex industry (the construction of their own sexual identity in relation to the sex industry, their sense of self and their desires, hopes and ideology behind their purchases in the sex industry), I position myself as a scholar and as a researcher belonging to the group of people who support survivor's analysis of the sex trade and sex buyers.

Some studies and authors have started to look into the experiences of the people purchasing services or sex in the sex trade. A seminal piece of work on this area is *The John: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It* by journalist Victor Malarek (2009). Similar to Malarek's work, there have been studies which use qualitative research in which the researcher

interviews the buyers themselves or qualitative data that sheds light on the demographic trends of the issue (Banyard, 20) (de Miguel, 172). This thesis is relevant because it joins the emerging field which looks at what buyers say to one another and to each other without the presumption of insider/outsider juxtapositions in which the sex buyer knows that he is being evaluated or investigated by a researcher. By speaking freely to each other, we may get a better sense of their thinking process as to why they chose to pay for sex.

This thesis inquires: how do sex buyers speak about the people they visit in prostitution? How do they talk about themselves being sex buyers? How do they talk to each other about being sex buyers in the sex trade? By analyzing both their words on the reviews they write and the conversations and thread they engage in on community forums for sex buyers, we are able to get a glimpse of how sex buyers construct their own sense of masculinity in the sex industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Language and Terminology**

Language is political and in the sex trade debate, words have political meaning that carry broad repercussions (Ekis Ekman, 4). Malarek writes that sex buyers, and their supporters, are well aware of the power of words and have deliberately chosen to depoliticize language as best they can in the way they describe both their role, as well as the role of the women they interact with. He argues that “johns are attuned to the power of words and are well aware of the stigma of paying for sex, so most don’t call themselves ‘johns’ or ‘prostitute users,’ nor do they like the term ‘prostitution’” (Malarek, 12). Instead, we are presented with the language of labor (Ekis Ekman, 64).

Rachel Moran, a survivor and leader in the abolitionist movement and the author of *Paid for: my journey through prostitution*, argues that this twisting and turning of language is deliberate. “The denialist mentality of men who use women in prostitution has never been so utterly fed-to-bloating as it is by the ideology of the ‘sex work’ lobby. There has perhaps never been an ideological framework in history that so thoroughly condones and emboldens the practice of oppression by the oppressed. It says, simultaneously, “continue to abuse us please” and “be at rest that there is no abuse going on here” (Moran, 28). In order to detangle the ways language is used to obscure material realities in the sex industry,

Moran argues that we must “cut through the ‘sex work’ ideology” so that we may see “a reality that has been purposefully and aggressively hidden” (Moran, 28).

Interestingly, during my research I learned that the term “sex work” is almost entirely absent from the online communities for sex buyers but it is abundant in academic literature. This seems fitting given that the term itself originated in academia. There is some debate as to who popularized the term sex work versus who coined it but, what the evidence shows is that it was first used by Priscilla Alexander, one of the founders of the influential sex industry lobby group COYOTE (which stands for Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics).

Alexander says that although she has never actually worked as a prostitute, her sex life during her years as a student at Bennington College was somehow equitable. "I never have literally worked as a prostitute...although I was stigmatized as a whore at one time" (Alexander, 1987, pp.14-18). This did not prevent COYOTE from building a reputation as the leading voice for women in prostitution in the United States. It was not only the media who didn't bothered to investigate the origins of this terminology or whether or not Alexander was an adequate spokeswoman, but the at one point, even the World Health Organization hired her as a consultant on HIV/AIDS (Raymond, 1998).

Kajsa Ekis Ekman, a Swedish journalist and author of *Being and Being Bought*, argues that the renaming of prostitution as ‘sex work’ is deliberate and purposeful. She argues that “according to this way of thinking, prostitution has nothing to do with the relationship between women and men but instead, it’s quite simply a business transaction. We are then to speak in business-related terms” (Ekis Ekman, 5). Once the debate has been moved away from a feminist perspective that centers patriarchy as a system of oppression and moves towards a neoliberal framework, it becomes much easier to sanitize and obscure power dynamics between men and women.

Ana de Miguel, a Spanish scholar and author of *Neoliberalismo Sexual (Sexual Neoliberalism)*, goes even further in stating that the sex industry has been able to thrive precisely because of the complicity of both conservative as well as progressives’ ignorance or deliberate misinformation on the issue. She writes that “The ideology of prostitution is very elastic and manages to reconcile opposing arguments to legitimize its practices, it’s necessity, it’s inevitability. It has legitimized itself and has been legitimized from both conservative stances as well as liberal and progressive” (de Miguel, 2016).

de Miguel ties the bipartisanship of support for the sex trade to the Sexual Revolution in the United States in the 1970’s. She writes, based on the work of Kate Millett, that the so-called ‘sexual revolution’ was laden

with patriarchal attitudes that shredded some double standards for the sexual conducts of men and women but further perpetuated others. Her arguments suggests that “according to the new sexual norms, sex is good and having lots of sex is wonderful, modern and transgressive, is anti-establishment. To be critical of anything regarding sex is repressive and conservative in itself. The moral judgement is that moral judgement must stay out of the territory of sex” (de Miguel, 159). This analysis is replicated by Rachel Hills in *The Sex Myth* in which she contends that the sexual revolution of the 1960s in the United States was “a public rejection of the old rules that governed sex and relationships” (Hills, 21). But Hills problematizes what happened after the sexual revolution by arguing that whereas before, sex was repressed and taboo, after the sexual revolution sex attained the status of an untouchable force. Meaning that to be critical of anything relating to sex was the new taboo.

It was a sexual revolution that was critical of double morals regarding sex, but not of the sexuality narratives established to benefit hegemonic masculinity. Hence the beginning of the “reinvention of the sex buyer.” Ekis Ekman illustrates how under the new tropes of sexual liberation, the archrival of the prostitute is not exploitative men but feminists who were critical of exploitative men. She writes that long gone are the days of wondering about causes of the sex trade or analysis of sex buyers’ motives. Instead it’s best to “construct a narrative drama of a struggle between

good and evil. One in which on one side, there are ‘the women who have sexual relations with many men and those who sell their bodies for money’ and on the other side ‘radical feminist and politicians’” who want to repress women’s sexual autonomy (Ekis Ekman, 10). This debate rages on from the infamous sex wars within the feminist movement until today.

de Miguel seconds this notion and points out that “authors and activists who criticized the patriarchal nature of the new sex norms were ignored and silenced. They were also deemed as frigid, repressed and puritans or feminist and lesbians, which became an efficient way to disqualify.” The labelling process is, of course, misogynist in itself in that it tries to silence feminist critique by reducing women to smears and name-calling. This disqualification sometimes manifest itself in bizarre ways.

In July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, a popular women’s fashion website called Refinery29, silenced prostitution survivor and activist Rachel Moran because her views of the sex trade conflicted with theirs. Refinery29 describes itself as “the fastest growing independent fashion and style website in the United States, is a lifestyle platform that delivers nonstop inspiration to help women live a more stylish and creative life.” They tweeted the message “At a @donors4women breakfast @RachelRMoran reminds us ‘sex work is not work; it’s compensated sexual violation.’ Powerful words to start the day.” However, Refinery29 removed the tweet

within hours and explained, “We’d like to address our quote from @RachelRMoran this morning—her opinion does not reflect @refinery29’s point of view on sex work. @Refinery29 believes in every woman’s right to make choices about her own body, including by choosing to engage in sex work. We strongly oppose trafficking and support efforts to fight this harmful, dangerous human rights violation. This is a complicated conversation, and we’d love to hear from you.”

Just a handful of people criticized the website but the critical responses they got were from pro-sex industry advocates like the Scarlett Academy and Poems for Sex Work. The last one said: “Not complicated. Trafficking Facts mostly made up, groups focus more on harming sex workers then helping them or real victims” and “The fact you were even at a breakfast with Rachel Moran speaks volumes about your attitude to sex workers.” Keep in mind that Rachel Moran is a woman who entered prostitution at the age of 14 and worked in prostitution for 7 years, yet as both Ekis Ekman and de Miguel point out, any dissenting voice about what Ekis Ekman deems the “sex work narrative”, including the voice of those with lived experiences in the sex industry and who are against it, must be silenced. Therefore, in this construct of sex work, only the sex worker is centered, never the john or any person who is critical of the sex industry even if they themselves were a part of it.

de Miguel argues that this paints the picture of prostitution as an international and globalized institution. She says “Access to women’s bodies is guaranteed almost all over the world. A man can travel to Valencia, Pernambuco, go through Taiwan or Egypt. He just has to stop a taxi driver and ask these simple questions ‘So, where are the women here?’ and ‘where are the girls?’ and ‘you get me, right?’” (de Miguel, 164). This argument could be troubled perhaps in the sense that said man would need to be relatively privileged himself (wealth, race, nationality) but we see the confirmation of this hypothesis in the work of journalist Victor Malarek when he does precisely what de Miguel formulates.

Malarek read about sex buyers who travel abroad for sex tourism in the same online communities that I myself used for my research and equipped with his white, male, Global North privilege he asked taxi drivers in several countries about places and opportunities to buy sex, sometimes with very young girls. The taxi drivers always replied with recommendations, never with concern or dismissal. Malarek documented his experiences in his book *The Johns: sex for sale and the men who buy it*.

For example, Malarek writes “I hailed a taxi for the short ride back to my hotel. I’d been told that taxi drivers are an important part of the sex trade here (Costa Rica). Like doorman at bars, they are the middlemen. They know the sex scene and often drive clients to brothels- including

those offering children” (Malarek, 156). The taxi driver asks him “Are you looking for some action?” and he replied “Always, but very young.” The taxi driver asks “You like girls?” and he responds “Love them.” The taxi driver says he knows a place with very young girls “Very sweet, very tasty.” How old? Twelve and thirteen.

Malarek argues that, for sex buyers, the word prostitute “is too value-laden, too controversial a word. They prefer more neutral terms, like provider, and for themselves, client.” They also prefer the terms of business, which is fairly savvy given that this is in fact a capitalist enterprise to its core. They speak of business transactions, “service providers” (sex being the service), “sex workers” and “working girls.” There is also the language of book clubs and video games culture with terms like “hobby,” “mongers,” “punters” and “hobbyists” (Malarek, 94).

According to the popular narrative, we are also now to speak in work and labor related terms. The language and framework of prostitution as work is indeed a deeply political decision (Banyard, 91). This political framing is important because, it helps “influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts and other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame” (Nelson et al., 569).

British writer and feminist analyst Sarah Ditum takes a step back and argues in an article titled *Why we shouldn't rebrand prostitution* “sex

*work*” that what is at stake in this semantic reframing is the basic relations between men and women in society.

Ditum writes “Sex work” is not a neutral term: it trails its political assumptions tacitly behind it, as certainly as any alternative. When we talk about “sex work”, we endorse the idea that sex is labour for women and leisure for men – men who have the social and economic power to act as a boss class in the matter of intercourse. And most damningly of all, we accept that women's bodies exist as a resource to be used by other people – male people with the wherewithal to pay by the fuck.”

Ditum takes the labour language of sex industry advocates and turns it on its head, writing that yes, prostitution is an economic transaction, but it is an economic transaction meant to sustain a gender hierarchy between men and women. Ditum explains “prostitution is an economic institution made up not only of the women who sell sex, but critically, of the men who create the demand, commit the violence and extract the emotional toll on the women they have sex with.”

Yet regardless of how we interpret the economics of the sex industry, there is one group of people who are deliberately ignored from the conversation about it: survivors. In an alleged effort to broadcast a more inclusive representation of voices (“listen to the sex workers”), the voices of the majority of women (and girls) in the industry is being sidelined, as shown in the Refinery29/Rachel Moran example.

For example, when the Associated Press was considering changing the word ‘prostitution’ for ‘sex work’ in their Editorial Stylebook, over 300 survivor advocates, human trafficking organizations and front-line advocates pleaded for it to reconsider (CAT International, 2014). They said that they “strongly oppose the terms “sex work” and “sex worker” and urged the AP to use alternative vocabulary.

These terms, they argued, were invented by the sex industry and its supporters in order to legitimize prostitution as a legal and acceptable form of work and conceal its harm to those exploited in the commercial sex trade. They also argued that in ‘sex worker’ there was a semantical question of who is passive and who is active in the equation. According to their letter, “The term ‘sex worker’ wrongly suggests that the person in prostitution is the primary actor in the multi-billion-dollar sex trade. This renders invisible and unaccountable its true beneficiaries - the traffickers, pimps, procurers, brothel and strip club owners, and the buyers of sex” (CATW International, 2014).

Some survivor advocates like the Members of the Aboriginal Women’s Action Network (AWAN) in Canada wrote that the terminology of ‘sex work’ is not only dishonest but also colonialist. They argued that they “reject the colonial terminology of ‘sex work,’ as it hides the racist, sexist, and classist realities of prostitution. ‘Sex work’ masks the violence that our sisters struggle against on a daily basis and repackages that

violence as a form of freely chosen labour.” (CATW International, 2014). In fact, it has been aboriginal women and indigenous women who have been leading the pushback against sex buyers and the sex industry in countries like Canada.

Others like Bridgett Perrier of SexTrade101, a survivor advocate also in Canada, writes that “The term ‘sex work’ is offensive. The indignity and the abuse inflicted by the men who paid to violate me could never be considered ‘work.’ Prostitution was not a ‘choice’; prostitution chose me” (Murphy, 2015). Fellow survivor advocate Beatriz Elena Rodríguez Rengifo from Colombia’s ASOMUPCAR, a grassroots organization that provides services and support for working class, rural communities, argues that “The term ‘sex work’ is completely inaccurate... It is used to put a veil and disguise crimes against women, against women’s lives. Because it is not work, it is not a choice you can make. It is not any kind of career. It is not a behavior. The term is a disguise they use to hide a crime” (CATW International, Equality Now 2014). According to this view and as Ekis Ekman points out, the term “sex worker” becomes a postmodern version of the term “happy hooker.”

Melissa Gira Grant, former camgirl (meaning a person who performs sexually over video for pay) and author of *Playing the Whore: the work in sex work* argues for *The Guardian* in a piece titled ‘Will nobody listen to sex workers?’ published on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, that

questions about the trade should not even take place. She argues “We should, in fact, refuse to debate. Sex work itself and, inseparable from it, the lives of sex workers are not up for debate – or they shouldn't be.” She contends that “The problem at hand is not how do we improve the lives of sex workers? but how should we continue to think and talk about the lives of sex workers, to carry on our discourse on prostitution regardless of how little sex workers are involved in it?” I find it strange that Gira Grant is more concerned with language than with improving the lives of people in prostitution and that she would say so, openly, in an article.

Aside from that, as we can see, when we say “listen to sex workers” we are essentially saying that only those who are in the industry out of their free will (a privileged position) and in turn support the industry, should have a voice in the debate. Those like Rodriguez Rengifo, Perrier or Moran who have been prostituted or who are still in the industry but who want to see an end to it and refuse the “sex worker” label, are left out of the conversation. As an argument, it is a self-fulfilling prophesy, like an ironclad logical circle.

- **Online Communities as Support Groups for Sex Buyers**

The online communities have both a functional purpose (sex buyers recommend women in prostitution to each other) as well as a moral support purpose. Malarek writes that according to some sex buyers, the online communities provide a space to override the guilt and shame they

may feel about society's frowning of the sex industry. A sex buyer whose screen name was Down Under said "Catholic guilt and thoughts of my family and friends finding out make me a bit uneasy." He said that he used to feel guilty for years but that "as time went on, I learned, through sites like this that we are not alone. There are millions of men across the globe that share this common interest. We like women! If that's a crime, I'm guilty" (Malarek, 106).

Not all sex buyers feel guilt, of course. Some are proud and don't ask too many questions about the implications of it. Malarek describes them as "lifers." For the younger sex buyers, they serve as an inspiration with their tales of decades of "mongering." A twenty-three-year-old whose screen name is Sir Dick says "I want to die shagging. That's how I want to go out. A bottle of Viagra on my night table, a grin on my face and a sweet young sexy pro telling the coppers I went out with a wild moan of ecstasy emanating from my lips" (Malarek 107).

I would argue that while feminism, particularly liberal feminism, is providing the legitimization and moral support for the sex trade in the public arena, the online communities work as a semi-hidden support group for sex-buyers who directly benefit from the theoretical work many liberal feminists are doing on this topic. Very few people have any knowledge that the sites even exist which means that once again, the core of the trade remains obscured.

Kat Barnyard argues that buying sex “legitimizes male sexual entitlement. It teaches men that women’s pleasure is irrelevant to sex, and then encourages men to believe that women should give the appearance of enjoying everything a man wants to do to them. It’s the ultimate coercion: to be denied not only your own will, but even the capacity to show that you have a will” (Ditum, 2016). What Banyard describes is what Kathleen Barry described as “sex of prostitution” (Barry, 1995) in which “sex” is meant to imply “the one-sided sexual use of a woman in which the woman’s pleasure and personhood are irrelevant” (Jeffreys, 65). It may seem redundant to argue that in the sex industry, the norm is indeed “sex of prostitution” but keep in mind that oftentimes sex industry advocates argue that the sex industry is about pretty much everything else but sex or male pleasure.

An academic who supports this idea is Teela Sanders, whose work will be referenced in this thesis thoroughly. Sanders argues that the communities are a way for sex buyers to build social capital. (Sanders, 84). She says that “it can be argued that the internet and virtual sex work communities are places where men build social capital and support networks which are both reliant and separate from their common identity as patrons of sex workers.” She continues “cyberspace is a place that unites people who have specific interests and oversteps differences to match common characteristics” (Sanders, 84).

As I will demonstrate later on in the thesis, these spaces do indeed provide camaraderie and solidarity by allowing sex buyers the opportunity to share ideas, ask questions and build rapport. Yet they could easily become indoctrinating tools in which wayward sex-buyers are coerced into towing the line, for example, when a new sex buyer expresses sentiments of love towards a “service provider” or when a sex buyer decided he doesn’t want to pay for sex anymore.

- **Hegemonic Masculinity Literature**

Does the concept of masculinity present, in itself, a problem? If so, how? Writing in 1979, Peter Stearns argues that although “the most articulate comment on sex roles has recently come from women critical of male claims, real or presumed, some analysts now point to the need for reasserting a specifically male role in family in society. Ultimately, the only common currency among the diverse interpretations of manhood now available is a sense that masculinity is sorely troubled in modern society, both in concept as in practice” (Stearns, 1). He argues that the question becomes ‘What is the trouble?’ and ‘What has caused it?’ I would argue that masculinity in itself is not the trouble and that this may be a false narrative that prevents analysis of the social construction of gender.

Stearns laments that “too much recent feminist history has treated men as stereotypes, backdrops for, or villains in the anguish of females... Changes in female roles have affected men, sometimes adversely, and this

is a vital point to establish. But there is no search here in villainess” (Stearns, 9). Sanders also contends that if only we took a more thoughtful approach to the actual desires and performances of men’s masculinities, we would see that the construction of “men as a problem for women, children and sexuality in general” is misguided (Sanders, 11).

According to Sanders, much of the blame for this unfair characterization of men is the fault of radical feminists. She says that “radical feminists, who seek to abolish prostitution, construct ‘the problem of prostitution’ as the problem with male sexuality” (Sanders, 174). This analysis brings the ideas and questions raised by radical feminists from a systems level analysis of patriarchy as a global structure to an individual level one. Instead of challenging a system of oppression (patriarchy), radical feminists are presented, by scholars like Sanders, as having trouble with individual male sexual desires. Sheila Jeffreys argues that the argument that sex buyers are “misunderstood, ordinary men who are exercising their consumer rights under a marketplace” and that they are just “individual, choice-laden consumers” serves to “deflect attention from the structural factors involved in the sex industry domestically and globally” (Jeffreys, 60).

It seems as if there was a real sense of fear that masculinity as a concept was becoming a caricature, at least in the 1979 writings of Peter Stearns. This could be perfectly matched by the works of contemporary

women scholars such as Sanders. Indeed, both scholars seem to be working in conjunction in their analysis even though their books are separated by over 40 years. Stearns thought that “one of the fascinating features about some modern men, beginning in the nineteenth century and most obvious in the men’s liberation literature of today, is an almost masochistic sense of guilt about the real or imagined woes of women, a desire to be in the forefront of the fray against “maledom” (Stearns, 9). I would argue the problem with these statements is not so much the hyperbole and the way it misconstrues feminist analysis, but that it is, at its core, an individual level analysis. The issue has never been “maleness” in itself, however a person constructs said masculinity; the issue has been the dynamics of power and a structural analysis of gendered power imbalances.

Sanders, however, matches Stearns exact narrative. She writes in her introduction “this book attempts to understand men’s experience of personal intimate relationships outside of an essentialist discourse. Men, particularly heterosexual men, are often not explored as subjects on their own right, as sexual beings with legitimate desires, attractions and pleasures” (Sanders, 11). Personally, I would counter this argument and note that the history of humanity worldwide for the past 6000 years is a thorough exploration into the desires, attractions and pleasures of

precisely heterosexual men, especially those with superfluous money (like sex buyers) and privilege.

In Sanders analysis, men who pay for sex are themselves a marginalized sector of society who are victims of the stigma of prostitution. Sanders writes that men who pay for sex are “sexually disenfranchised by a society that is still troubled by accepting sexual difference among consenting adults” (Sanders, 81). Again, I firmly disagree with this view expressed by Sanders, and the word ‘disenfranchised’ to refer to sex buyers seems out of place, at best, in the context of the sex industry.

What is a man anyway? How do we define “men” and “masculinities” without becoming essentialist in the process? Richard Howson writes that when we try to pay closer attention to masculinities, a paradox emerges. This interest sheds light on a subject “with respect to men’s issues, within a significant yet, historically dormant section of the community, the bulk of the works that sit under this rubric continue to express traditional interpretations of gender relations and practice, in which biologically based gender delineations and functional reciprocity are sustained as legitimate grounds for knowledge about normative gender behavior. Therefore, how do we analyze constructions of masculinity without the problematicity of essentialism and its concomitant rigidity about certain roles and practices?” (Howson, 1).

Who gets to define masculinity? Can we question it if there is no clear definition of it? How?

Stearns argued back in 1979 that men and the performance of masculinity were not parallel to the indoctrination of women into femininity. He writes “Be a man! What a strange order, yet it runs through so many human societies. We do not rush out to daughters and urge them to be women. The signals we have are more subtle, though they can be just as constraining. For a boy, manhood is at once desirable and mysterious, a state demanding achievement” (Stearns, 10). I would argue that this may be because under a patriarchy ‘womanhood’ is nothing to aspire to, in fact, it might be a cause of constant dread for girls. And girls and women are inundated, of course, with messages on how to properly perform their femininity.

Yet the fear of feminist “attack” remains. Stearns writes that “some feminists indeed seem to be attacking male images of the past and atypical men of the present rather than the complexity of contemporary manhood itself, which leaves ordinary contemporary men more than a bit bewildered” (Stearns 170).

Apprehensions that feminists’ analysis of masculinity would end up reducing masculinity to a caricature are not new. Sanders writes that “Men who pay for sex are portrayed as social misfits, personally and psychologically inept and often a potential danger to women, children,

family life and the broader moral fabric of society” (Sanders, 131). Some of these fears may be founded, for example, when we examine violence against women as a subject, and more specifically, to sex-buyers when we examine topics of sexual abuse inside the sex trade, human trafficking rates and sex tourism. The concerns about sex-buyers being a danger to women and children, however uncomfortable it might be to state openly, are not unfounded (Malarek, 133). Nonetheless, Sanders concludes that “The construction of men who pay for sex is a product of the labelling process” (Sanders, 131).

Sheila Jeffreys disagrees with Sanders analysis. Jeffreys argues that the behavior of men who pay for sex is “socially constructed” (as opposed to a biological urge) and that the idea of prostitution itself, meaning “that women’s bodies can be bought and used for men’s sexual pleasure, is cultural and (as such) can be encouraged or discouraged” (Jeffreys, 1997).

Why center men? Malarek explains that, simply put, without men, there would be no sex trade (Malarek, 2009). I would be more systemic in pointing out that the issue is not men per se, but patriarchy and how it happens to benefit men as a class. Malarek argues that “in economic parlance, women are the commodity; they are on the supply side of the equation. On the demand side of the equation are the men. Without men, there would be no demand. There would be no supply side, either: it would not be profitable for pimps and criminals to stay in this business if

platoons of men weren't prowling side streets in search of purchased sex; male buyers who are willing to close their eyes and shell out fifty or a hundred dollars for a few minutes of physical bliss while deepening the misery of countless women and children" (Malarek XV).

Sander's *Paying for Pleasure* centers men because according to the author, in debates about the sex trade what is routinely absent is an honest conversation of men's pleasure. She argues that commentary and research critical of sex buyers are "barely short of manhating" in that they create a binary in which "all men who buy sex are considered dangerous and all sex workers are disheveled victims or rational calculating criminals." To be fair, I would add that in my research of this topic, I have never encountered this absolutist narrative for either side, and Sanders does not provide specific examples to prove her point. Indeed, it would be bizarre and counterproductive for survivor advocates to either victimize or vilify themselves and their own experiences in the way that Sanders portrays. Pretty much all of the survivor-led advocacy and literature that exists against the sex industry is far more complex and nuanced than Sanders claims (SPACE International, 2016).

Sanders also argues that although "the radical feminist perspective has been counteracted by real voices from female sex workers and 'identity politics' through the sex worker's rights movement, men who buy sex have no platform for their voice." This gap is unfortunate and sex

buyers must be understood as “a powerful group in their everyday status position yet have no political power or voice regarding their sexual identity and practices” (Sanders, 10).

As I’ve mentioned, this is true only in the most technical sense. Yes, most sex workers counter the radical feminist critique of prostitution. But only a small percentage of people in prostitution identify themselves as sex workers to begin with.

I would also point out that, contrary to Sanders assertions, it’s not that sex-buyers have “no political power or voice regarding their sexual identity and practices” ... it’s that these are rendered invisible under the mantel of a hegemonic masculinity. Sex-buyers don’t need to write books and manifestos to have a voice; the entire sex trade is catering to their every need without the need of public declarations about it. Chris Beasley quotes Michael Kimmel when he states that “masculinity is almost invariably invisible in shaping social relations, it’s ever-present specificity and significance shrouded in its constitution as the universal, the axiomatic, the neutral” (Beasley, 29). Masculinity, according to Kimmel, “assumes the banality of the unstated norm: not requiring comment, let alone explanation. Its invisibility bespeaks its privilege” (Bearn, 29).

Therefore, fundamental questions such as ‘how come the vast majority of the people involved in the sex trade as prostitutes, escorts, sex workers, virtual sex workers, sex trafficking victims etc. are women and

girls?’ and ‘how come almost all of the demand for these services is made up of men?’ constitute obvious but startling questions. These questions end up “rendering gender and masculinity visible and offers a challenge to existing power relations and their continued reiteration” (Bearn, 29).

Connell, Hearn and Kimmel (Bearn, 30) warn against making assumptions about men and masculinity on a broad scale. First because as a field, the study of masculinity formation in transnational arenas is in its infancy but also because much of the push for this analysis is being carried out by men in the Global North and we should be wary of generalizations or analysis being conducted in the Global North that universalize experiences that may not be replicated in the Global South.

This critique also applies to the role of men as sex buyers in the sex industry. A British sex buyer’s understanding of his own masculinity when he visits a South American prostitute in Wales may be very different than the way a Dominican man understands his own masculinity when visiting a Dominican prostitute in the Dominican Republic.

However, according to Chris Beasley, the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ does carry some benefits in that it is renowned enough already within feminist literature and offers a reference for critique and deconstruction. He writes that “because this terminology has unparalleled usage and occupies a uniquely privileged positioning in the study of men

and masculinities within local gender orders, it is clearly a crucial term for situating masculinities *per se*” (Beasley, 31).

If we try to apply this terminology to a global scale, we run into other intersections such as the capitalist economy, globalization and neoliberalism. Connell speaks of hegemonic masculinity in terms of a “transnational business masculinity” in the sense that this could be described as “a hegemonic masculinity on a world scale- that is to say, a dominant form of masculinity that embodies, organizes and legitimizes men’s domination in the world gender order as a whole” (Connell, 46). However, Beasley critiques that under most scholar’s understandings of hegemonic masculinity the gender aspects of masculinity seem to be subsumed under a class analysis, even in the writing of scholars whose work is far “less wedded to an economic focus in research on the politics of masculinity on a global scale” (Beasley, 34). In spite of all of this, he argues, the power of the concept remains in that it helps to understand power as constitutive and always associated with the mobilization of consent and complicit embodied identities.

Would it be helpful to have an umbrella term to describe the masculinities in the online communities that will be used for this thesis? I would argue yes and no. No, in the sense that there is much diversity in the writings of sex buyers and what they post individually; to try to use a broader framework would seem to essentialize them. But yes, in the sense

that regardless of whatever individual features they could bring to the encounter or the online communities that they visit afterwards, their social construction as men, however diverse this may be, is inexorable from the power they hold as a collective in the sex trade.

- **Sex-buyers' Literature**

Malarek approaches his subject matter from a key positionality. Whereas Sanders is a young, white woman from the Global North and she approaches sex buyers as a researcher, Malarek can pass as a sex buyer himself. Malarek uses his male, white, Global North privileges to talk to prostituted women and girls on the basis of a potential costumer instead of a researcher (Malarek, 2009). He also manages to speak with sex buyers on an “equal” basis. At some points, he inquiries about topics (such as the availability of children for commercial exploitation) which would be inaccessible to a researcher or someone in Sanders' position. Malarek conducted research both on the online communities but also in saunas, strip clubs and on international hotspots for sex tourism (particularly sex tourism that preys on young children) (Malarek, 135, 149).

Sanders talks about how she had to be cleared as one of ‘the good ones’ to be allowed to interview sex buyers. They were wary that her work would continue to perpetuate damaging images upon them. In a section of her book *Paying For Pleasure* titled ‘Smashing stereotypes and contributing to knowledge,’ she writes that she wanted to be a *different*

kind of researcher on this topic. She writes that her respondents “were motivated by the overall research objectives of wanting to challenge negative stereotypes about who punters are.” And that one respondent replied to her request with “This is a good opportunity to do something to persuade the world that we are not sleazy scumbags in dirty macs!” (‘mac’ is a pseudonym for condom) (Sanders, 29). I find it a bit baffling that a researcher could write a book with the overt preamble that she deliberately wants to show a positive spin to counter stereotypes instead of trying to assess the topic as it is to begin with. However, one could assume that Sanders is merely being honest about her intention going into the work she produces.

Sanders is, in fact, very pleased with her own sense of supposed neutrality. She writes “it was important that I was considered among the gatekeepers as someone who did not have a narrow ‘agenda’, especially an overtly radical view of male sexuality as a direct threat to women” (Sanders, ,19) and that she was glad that the male sex buyers who responded to her study knew of her “awareness of the complexities of sex work as an organization and the interactive emotional, physical and psychological relationships that male sex buyers have with female sex workers.”

This emphasis on the role of emotions and intimacy in her work was not coincidental either. Sanders explains in her methodology that she

purposefully steered clear of the language of sex. She argues that many of the research subjects were surprised by the focus on emotions and says that “this procedure enabled the interactions and relationships I had with the male responders to be framed within a research context that was, as much as possible, devoid of the sexualized context and behavior that underlined the subject matter” (Sanders, 21). What happens to the sex industry if you take the actual sex that is being paid for out of the equation? It transitions from a material reality into the world of ideas, as Andrea Dworkin would put it. And emotion and intimacy are rendered as far more prominent or important to the transaction than they actually are.

Sanders comments often on her own sense of balance and at one point she compares her work researching prostitution as similar to prostitution itself (Sanders, 25). She writes “feedback after the interview on the ‘usefulness’ of the interview process was revealed as cathartic, similar to that of relaxing with a sex worker to discuss personal trials and tribulations.” I would note that in my own research, sex buyers often wrote negative reviews about women in prostitution who talked about the “trials and tribulations” that they were going through in their own lives.

Sanders argues that we are being deeply unfair to sex buyers. She writes that “a symbolic and institutional shift has occurred in recent decades from the acceptability (or mild ambivalence) of buying sex to the

construction of such behavior as anti-social, uncivil and a danger to women, children and the cohesion of the communities.” The consequences of this shift are that “male sexual desire, pleasure and sexuality” becomes a target for punitive enforcement strategies, individual blame and social humiliation (Sanders, 181).

Malarek is less forgiving of sex buyers, though. He writes that “while the women are stigmatized with terms laced with opprobrium and distaste -prostitutes, hookers, whores, harlots, and sluts- the user of prostituted women are benignly tagged clients, patrons, customers and johns. Yet it is these very men who are the root of the (sex trade) problem.” Contrary to Sanders, he does not see a disruption between the “legal sex work” arguments and human trafficking. He explains that “men are the users and abusers of prostituted women and children. It is their demand for paid sex that is creating huge profits for crime networks worldwide and incentives for traffickers, pimps, brothel owners, and porn producers to entrap more and more victims.” (Malarek, XV). It becomes abundantly clear that his writing centers a feminist understanding of patriarchal power. He is not interested in providing a counter narrative to situations that he finds disgusting, for example how easily it was for sex buyers to recommend sex tourism spots and for fellow men and sex buyers to recommend children for purchase.

Parrot and Cummins, in their work, *Sexual Enslavement of Women and Girls Worldwide*, argue that there can be no compromise in understanding the thread that unites sexual violence in the lives of women and girls. They write “there is little debate that a belief in male superiority and the cultural male dominance that stems from it are at the core of the violence perpetrated against women worldwide” (Parrot and Cummins, 13). This is why the sexual neoliberalism articulated by de Miguel provides such a confounding scenario. Unless understood as a whole thread that connects all forms of objectification of the bodies of women, there can be no dismantling of the patriarchy. Parrot and Cummins say “the feminization of poverty, familiar obligations, sexual abuse, homelessness, political turmoil, economic downturns, civil unrest, war and natural disasters all create circumstances that enable those intent on making use of women and girls as sexual objects” (Parrot and Cummins, 34).

When analyzing the situation, Malarek speaks in terms of a brotherhood. He writes “what this brotherhood reveals is that, when it comes to sexuality and prostitution, john’s attitudes are remarkably consistent throughout the world. On these forums- whether in the U.S., Canada, Australia or Europe- it quickly becomes apparent that the search for paid sex is all about entitlement, power and control. What the john is looking for is a brief encounter where he can let go and freely express his

most selfish desires. It doesn't matter whether he's with a high-priced call girl, a street-walker, or a stripper in a bar. His wants, needs, and desires reign supreme" (Malarek, 11).

Michael Bader, a psychotherapist from San Francisco has studied the dynamics of sexual arousal and writes in an article titled "Why men do stupid things: The psychological appeal of prostitutes" that "having studied the dynamics of sexual arousal for almost 15 years, and having treated dozens of men who find prostitutes irresistible, I have found that for the overwhelming majority of them, the appeal lies in the fact that, after payment is made, the woman is experienced as completely devoted to the man -- to his pleasure, his satisfaction, his care, his happiness." This is something that I'll explore further when we look into particular aspects of the online communities such as the concept of 'The Girlfriend Experience' or GFE and my own analysis of how men in the sex industry are looking for a very specific form of performance which I call 'agentic complacency'.

Bader continues "the man doesn't have to please a prostitute, doesn't have to make her happy, doesn't have to worry about her emotional needs or demands. He can give or take without the burden of reciprocity. He can be entirely selfish. He can be especially aggressive or especially passive, and not only is the woman not upset, she acts aroused. He is not responsible for her in any way. She is entirely focused on him. He is the

center of her world. Now, of course, these interactions are scripted. The prostitute is acting. But it doesn't matter. For men who like to go to go to prostitutes, the illusion of authenticity is enough” (Bader, 2008).

Men who pay for sex don't have to reciprocate pleasure or attention, but some of them may want to. Malarek encountered in his research sex buyers who were keen on something that they titled 'The Boyfriend Experience' in which men provide the exact same features that the GFE must provide. This is a different usage than the one intended in the Glossary at PuntingWiki. The GFE is a set of sex acts that must be delivered in a 'loving' and 'caring' manner to make the sex buyer pretend that he is with an actual girlfriend, not with a paid prostitute. The BFE in turn means that, as Malarek puts it “for these johns, the warm-and-fuzzies that come from casting themselves as the boyfriend adds to the magic of the encounter” (Malarek, 73). In my research, no sex buyer ever mentioned the term 'boyfriend experience.' However, this provides an extra perspective into sex buyers motivations.

Roger Horrock's *Masculinity in Crisis* offers a provocative idea. According to him and based on his work as a therapist for many years, “patriarchal masculinity cripples' men” (Horrock 25). He argues that in his understanding of the dialectics of power, the subordinated holds what the oppressor desires the most. In violent men, for example, the acts of exerting power and dominance carry a hidden vulnerability: “frequently

we find that such men (violent men) have deep feelings of inadequacy, impotence and unwantedness. The violent man often secretly fears he is not a man, and sees no other way of proving he is than the method demonstrated to him by his society – violence and oppression” (Horrock, 25).

In this more nuanced yet problematic understanding of patriarchy (“I hit her because I was afraid” rhetoric) we could find a way of understanding what drives such a booming industry as the sex trade and what makes sex buyers fuel it. I would counter this narrative and argue that the global sex trade may be the fastest growing industry (International Labor Organization, 2012) in the world at the moment precisely because of the advancement of women and girls’ rights. This could easily prove controversial but it’s corroborated in the work of Malarek when he examines the frustrations of men with what they consider ‘WW/AW’ (western woman/American woman) as the main reason they resort to traveling to Global South countries as sex buyers. Similar discontent was found in the online communities during my own research when sex buyers bemoaned having to conform to equalitarian relationships with the women in their lives who were not part of the sex industry. I would be careful to say that I don’t think men’s automatic response to the advancement of women and girl’s rights is buying sex from women and girls in a more disadvantaged position. It seems to be,

however, the response from the most recalcitrant of men who refuse to modify their own attitudes and behavior.

- **Romantic Partnerships and Sex Buyers**

Some scholars argue that prostitution serves as a way to disrupt heteronormativity within the confines of a constraining marital structure. Teela Sanders argues “the origin of the social disapproval against buying sex is deeply rooted in the construction of sexuality in late modernity. Dominant social discourses of heterosexual monogamy and customary sexual behavior continues to place commercial sex at the margins of acceptability, framing the purchase of sex as ‘deviant’ sexual practice outside of the moral framework” (Sanders, 131). There are two separate arguments taking place here: the first is the argument that prostitution is a sexual orientation, which has been deconstructed by Ekis Ekman (Ekis Ekman, 10). The second is that prostitution serves to challenge the idea of “heterosexual monogamy.” Apart from that, this framing by Sanders sounds perfectly logical only if we were to remove both capitalism and patriarchy from the equation.

Sanders quotes a sex buyer when he states “the whole of Christian society has majored in the importance of marriage as keeping the family unit together and the whole social fabric evolved round the family as a stable unit and it’s (commercial sex) potentially undermining that’ (Terry, 68, married, lawyer)” (Sanders, 115). But if prostitution were “the oldest

profession” wouldn’t it have already undermined marriage as an institution? Is prostitution as much of a threat to marriage as equalitarian views about gender dynamics within relationships in society? How does prostitution challenge marriage as a social institution if most sex buyers are in stable relationships with women and approximately half of them are themselves married and return to their wives after they pay for sex? (Malarek, 41)?

Other scholars such as Malarek present a different picture. He writes that in his research, many of the johns experienced a deep sense of the Madonna-whore complex. According to a sex buyers named Bill “you marry for love but if you want to fuck like a dog, you go to a whore.” Malarek argues that some sex buyers “have a strict view about what type of sex is acceptable with a partner or wife. Normal sex, the bread and butter variety, is fine. Kinky sex is too dirty: practicing it with his wife would make her a whore” (Malarek, 44).

I disagree with Malarek here. I would challenge the idea that sex in prostitution is different than what Malarek considers “bread and butter” type of sex based on what I have gathered from the online communities and forums (Malarek, 44).

It may be that the idea that prostitution is the place where “transgressive sex” takes place, and therefore it’s understandable that sex buyers wouldn’t want to subject their wives and girlfriends to it is a

modern-day version of ‘The Drainage Model.’ The concept of this model was created by French physician Alexandre Parent-Duchatelet to help regulate prostitution. The model was “based on the idea that prostitution was necessary in channeling the unhealthy urges of men. Prostitution was like a drainage pipe that has to be installed to prevent the whole system from clogging up and beginning to sink” (Ekis Ekman, 42). The model is, of course, deeply offensive to the women and girls in prostitution but it also perpetuates the myth of inevitability. Aside from that, a clear challenge to the binary of “wife” versus “prostitutes” is embodied by the prominence of The Girlfriend Experience.

Malarek’s comments are valid in some sense, though. He writes “men who subscribe to this view tend to see women in one of two lights-either tainted or pure. The wife becomes the Madonna figure- a ‘good’ woman to be loved, cherished and protected. Because they see their wives as virtuous and pure, these men dare not engage them in anything ‘dirty’ or degrading. Yet by the same token they are excited by and don’t want to forgo the dirty side of themselves. For that, they sneak out with a fistful of cash.” But this is incomplete. The most requested service in review boards is GFE in which women in prostitution have to perform the role of a loving girlfriend for the amount of time being paid for.

In a rebuttal to both Malarek and Sanders, I argue that, as illustrated by the demand for GFE, what sex buyers want is neither ‘kinky sex acts’

nor ‘a separation from their married selves.’ When it comes to sex in prostitution, sex buyers are far more interested in The Girlfriend Experience (which relies heavy on emotional labor and the performance of affection) than in The Pornstar Experience (which consists on a varied list of sex acts and positions). Meaning that what drives them is the possibility to be able to control a woman in a way that they simply cannot control women outside of the sex industry.

- **Sex Buyers and Violence Against Women and Girls**

Some sex buyers worry about the implications of their hobby in any form of violence against women. Some authors like Kat Barnard, a British feminist activist and author of *Pimp State*, sees dehumanization as the core of sex buyer’s demands. She writes that when the sex buyer hands over money he buys the privilege of not having to consider nuances of the woman’s humanity (whether something is uncomfortable, degrading, whether she is in the mood). “He is getting instant access to a woman’s body in a scenario where he is in control. In short, he’s paying for the power to use a woman as his sexual tool” (Banyard, 51). According to Banyard, this in itself is a form of violence. “Dehumanization and misogyny enable the transaction. Without it the sex trade could not survive” (Banyard, 51).

In Malarek’s interviews and research there are some sex buyers who do feel remorse. He writes that “one troubled john confided that he had

been reading about the sex trade, including the trafficking of women from the former Soviet Union and countries like Thailand, Burma and Cambodia.” The sex buyer stated that “these reports indicate that a significant percentage of these women are sex slaves who are brought into the sex trade against their will, forced to work and live under horrible conditions and actual threat of violence, and bought and sold like cattle. I do not know if this is true or not. I have always chosen to believe that the WG (working girls) I have encountered were women who choose this life, in one way or another and for one reason or another, whether good or bad.” This sex buyer in particular had been patronizing prostitutes for over two decades and according to him he “rarely observed any woman who appeared to be under any significant duress or pressure to work in the profession *other than the pressures of poverty* and materialism” (Malarek, 102).

When addressing violence towards women in prostitution Sanders argues that “while I argue that a moral panic surrounding the kerb-crawler exist because the disruption, danger and violence posed by a few men in commercial sex are extended to all clients, the rub is that sex workers do experience high levels of violence in working environments.” I found it interesting that Sanders kept coming back to the term ‘kerb-crawling’ as I had never seen that term in online communities. Later I found out that it had been outlawed in England for decades and it was

meant to address only street prostitution. But Sanders references the term throughout her book, giving the impression that 'kerb-crawling' is a common form of prostitution.

Sander frames violence as having been correlated to the presence of street prostitution (as opposed to indoor prostitution) and cites a self-report survey of 77 sex buyers that found that "reports of physical violence in both a commercial and non-commercial setting were low, 80.3 per cent said they had not committed a violent act, including refusal to pay, against a sex worker" (Sanders, 179).

Nevertheless, Sanders cites research by Monto and Hotaling (2001) that explore the extent of rape myths among 1286 men arrested for soliciting in Las Vegas, San Francisco and Portland, Oregon which found that "although the overwhelming majority of clients did not hold such rape myths beliefs, a small number of respondents did express a high levels of rape myth in beliefs such as attraction to violent sexuality and sexual conservatism" (Sanders, 180). Sanders interprets this to mean that "this important study strongly suggests that the violence committed against sex workers is the action of a small number of men and certainly not a feature of all men who purchase sex" (Sanders, 180). There is newer research that has been made available that shows that sex buyers do, in fact, hold abusive ideas towards women and that they are more likely to commit sexual assault than men who do not pay for sex.

A study conducted by the University of California-Los Angeles in August 2015 articulated that “Men who buy sex have less empathy for women in prostitution than men who don't buy sex and are more likely to report having committed rape and other acts of sexual aggression. The study of 101 men in the Boston area who buy sex and 101 men who do not -- all of whom were promised confidentiality -- indicates that the perspective of sex buyers has similarities to that of sexual aggressors” (Malamuth, 2015). It may be that the sample that Sanders is referring to is not incomparable but it may also be possible that Parrot and Cummins were correct in tracing a linear thread among all violence that affects women and girls under a patriarchal system.

- **Feminist Rhetoric Being Hijacked to Support Toxic Masculinity in Sex Buyers**

Laura McNally argues that liberal feminism is to blame for failing to provide this criticism of oppression under patriarchy but “instead offering justifications of such practices. The liberal feminist defense of the sex trade has crept into politics, policy and research. Such an approach makes invisible the systemic inequality, exploitation and coercion that forces millions of girls and women into the trade” (McNally, 107). This is problematic because according to her, under a globalized, misogynist, consumer culture “criticism of the industrialization of women’s oppression is needed more than ever” (McNally, 107)

Indeed, scholars such as Sanders fail to even mention patriarchy as a factor for why there is such resistance to the sanitization of sex buyers. The account presented by Sanders in *Paying for Pleasure* would give one the impression that the problem with the sex industry and the role of men as buyers in the sex industry is about morality and fear of men's authentic sexuality as opposed to a criticism of the patriarchal nature of the trade or its gendered power dynamics.

McNally contends that this form of feminism, what she calls liberal feminism, is devoid "of structural and critical analysis of power" and that it "discusses power as an individual negotiation rather than a structural, contextual reality." (McNally 108)

Sanders's descriptions of the sex buyers are what could be described as a textbook definition of a liberal feminist view of the sex industry. Scholars Meagan Tyler and Miranda Kiraly write in *Freedom Fallacy* that "liberal feminism has helped recast women's liberation as an individual and private struggle, rather than one which acknowledges the systemic shortcomings of existing systems of power and privilege that continue to hold women back as a class" (Tyler, Kiraly xi).

Indeed, many so-called feminist arguments in favor of the sex trade end up reifying the belief systems of sex buyers themselves. Crucially, they allow sex buyers a convenient cover to hide behind. As long as feminists at large, but liberal feminists in particular, continue to support

the sex trade via various arguments, all sex buyers have to do is just claim to be supporting said feminists or what Ekis Ekman calls “the sex worker narrative.” They remain anonymous and become supposed allies to the feminist movement.

In turn, feminists who are critical of the sex trade become smeared and demonized as the real enemies to women’s sexual rights and liberties. Some sex buyer’s express guilt over their involvement in an industry that is so widely perceived to be exploitative and oppressive. Yet they convince themselves that the sex work narrative is actually the correct one as a way to assuage their guilt. In this loop, feminist support for the sex trade becomes the connecting link to both reify the sexual oppression of a capitalist, colonialist, racist and patriarchal system but also in defanging feminism from within.

Perhaps in order to understand these divergences in feminist thought between liberal feminist and radical feminist (or what could contemporarily be deemed second wave feminism and third wave feminism), we must analyze the sex trade from the perspective of Marxist feminism. Rosemary Tong argues in *Feminist Thought* that under a Marxist understanding of society “material forces- the production and reproduction of social life- are the prime movers in history” (Tong, 97). Meaning that “Marx believed a society’s total mode of production – that is, it’s forces of production (the raw material, tools, and workers that actually

produce goods) plus its relations of production (the way in which production is organized) generates a superstructure (a layer of legal, political, and social ideas) that in turn reinforces the mode of production” (Tong, 97).

In relation to the sex industry, this analysis would serve as a rebuttal to the idea that what must reign supreme in our understanding of the sex industry is individual people’s choices. Prostitution, as a system, does not depend on the personal feelings of an individual. On the contrary, we could easily make the argument that prostitution subsists despite of the individual feelings and desires of most women and children in it (who want to leave as evidence in the chart below) precisely because, as a superstructure, it’s mode of production must be reinforced to perpetuate patriarchy.

A Marxist feminist analysis would also address capitalism as a system of power, not simple a system of exchange. This implies that the labor being traded happens at the expense of the exploitation of the worker. Tong explains that capitalism as a system of power sustains itself by controlling the means of production. “Employers have a monopoly on the means of production, including factories, tools, land, means of transportation, and means of communication. Workers are forced to choose between being exploited and having no work at all” (Tong, 99).

I do not believe that the entirety of the mostly women and children in prostitution are there by force. However, the evidence on this is unmistakable (Farley et al, 2004): the vast majority of women in prostitution want to leave. This was demonstrated in one of the most comprehensive surveys on the matter (854 women in 9 countries: Canada, Colombia, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, United States and Zambia). When asked “What do you need?”, 699 women out of 854 responded that they needed to leave prostitution. This is a total of 89% of the women surveyed. 76% said they needed job training. 75% said they needed a home or a safe place to stay and 56% said they needed individual counseling.

TABLE 8. Responses to “What Do You Need?” Asked of 854 People in Prostitution

Needs	9 Country Summary (N = 854)	Canada (n = 100)	Colombia (n = 96)	Germany (n = 54)	Mexico (n = 123)	South Africa (n = 68)	Thailand (n = 116)	Turkey (n = 50)	USA (n = 130)	Zambia (n = 117)
Leave prostitution	89% (699)	95% (89)	97% (93)	85% (33)	68% (81)	89% (58)	92% (82)	90% (45)	87% (111)	99% (107)
Home or safe place	75% (618)	66% (63)	74% (71)	61% (33)	87% (107)	72% (46)	59% (64)	60% (30)	78% (99)	94% (105)
Job training	76% (600)	67% (64)	57% (55)	63% (34)	92% (113)	75% (48)	56% (61)	46% (23)	73% (93)	97% (109)
Drug/alcohol treatment	47% (356)	82% (78)	15% (14)	48% (26)	38% (47)	46% (29)	44% (33)	6% (3)	67% (85)	37% (41)
Health care	61% (480)	41% (39)	56% (54)	46% (25)	67% (82)	69% (44)	41% (45)	38% (19)	58% (74)	88% (98)
Peer support	51% (393)	41% (38)	41% (39)	65% (35)	36% (44)	58% (37)	49% (53)	24% (12)	50% (64)	63% (71)
Individual counseling	56% (431)	58% (54)	34% (33)	69% (37)	43% (53)	61% (39)	66% (72)	46% (23)	48% (61)	53% (59)
Self-defense training	45% (340)	49% (47)	29% (28)	46% (25)	35% (43)	60% (39)	59% (64)	12% (6)	49% (62)	41% (46)
Legal assistance	51% (366)	33% (31)	43% (41)	37% (20)	50% (61)	58% (37)	57% (62)	Unknown	42% (54)	54% (60)
Legalize prostitution	34% (251)	32% (30)	20% (19)	35% (19)	51% (62)	37% (24)	27% (30)	4% (2)	44% (56)	8% (9)
Child care	44% (335)	12% (11)	49% (47)	7% (4)	36% (44)	48% (31)	44% (48)	20% (10)	34% (43)	87% (97)
Physical protection from pimp	23% (157)	4% (4)	6% (6)	6% (3)	15% (19)	33% (21)	20% (22)	Unknown	28% (36)	41% (46)

It is clear to me that what is keeping women and girls in the sex trade is a mode of production that requires a constant influx of the ever-younger bodies of women and girls. I am referring here to the recent studies that show that there is a decrease in the demand from sex buyers of women for the purposes of sex trafficking and an increase in the demand for young girls (United Nations, 2014). Although trafficking is different than both prostitution and sex work, all three benefit the same global sex industry. This helps ensure that capital can be made from the exploitation of their bodies. Simply put, there are no separate brothels for sex workers, brothels for prostitutes and brothels for trafficking victims: there are just brothels and sex buyers who do not care about these distinctions, just the performance of the so-called 'service.'

When we connect all the dots together, we can see that the sole function of the sex industry is not only the production of capital at the expense of women and girls but the insurance of the "male sex right" for men. Caroline Pateman coined the term to mean that this right "is not reciprocal, because women do not have this right and it is created from male domination. Access to women's bodies for sexual, reproductive and labor purposes is a privilege that men have traditionally acquired either through marriage or through prostitution, both practices in which women are exchanged between men for use" (Jeffreys, 2009).

This research brings into the forefront the desire of sex buyers to construct a controllable woman that is both “empowered enough” for them to feel good about their identities as sex buyers but malleable enough that they can dictate her behavior. This ‘agentic complacency’ is a counter to the narrative put forth by sex worker’s rights organizations and sex industry advocates because, by definition, an independent, empowered person cannot be controlled at the whim of a buyer just because he has the money to dictate the situation.

## METHODOLOGY

- **Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis**

In this research and thesis on the construction of masculinity in online communities for sex buyers, I am using the theoretical framework of feminist critical discourse analysis to examine the content of the online communities. Language is deeply political in itself and simply summarizing and restating the content of the online communities that are being investigated is insufficient. Rather, given the gendered nature of the online discourse about buying sex, an intentional feminist analysis provides a necessary lens of gender to understand the constructions of masculinity expressed by the buyers. In *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis*, Michelle Lazar argues that a feminist critical discourse is about more than simply deconstructing rhetoric but is instead about critically analyzing the power dynamics that lie behind the language in any given space. Lazar states, “a critical perspective on unequal social arrangements sustained through language use, with the goals of social transformation and emancipation, constitutes the cornerstone of critical discourse analysis and many feminist language studies” (Lazar, 1).

Critical discourse analysis is about theorizing “the relationships between social practices and discourse structures and a wide range of tools and strategies for close analysis of actual, contextualized uses of language. Furthermore, under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis

research, explicit analysis of various forms of systemic inequalities have been developed. For feminist discourse scholars, much can be learnt about the interconnections as well as particularities of discourse strategies employed in various forms of social oppression that can feed back into feminist strategies for social change” (Lazar, 5).

A lens of feminist critical discourse analysis is helpful in this particular research, not only because we are looking at online narratives, but also because it allows us to examine the gendered power dynamics of male sex buyers paying for sex with women who work in prostitution. This discourse cannot be understood without a centering of power relations between men and women under patriarchy as a system of oppression. Janet Holmes argues in her essay “Power and Discourse at Work: Is Gender Relevant?” that “critical discourse analysis provides a framework to explore ways in which systemic power is constructed and reinforced in interaction, to identify how the dominant group determines meaning and, more specifically, to describe the processes by which the more powerful person in an interaction typically gets to define the purpose or significance of the interaction and influences the direction in which it develops” (Holmes, 31).

It is particularly pertinent for this thesis that we not only analyze discourse but that we also make a deliberate effort to highlight the gender dynamics at work. Lazar explains that the way that power and ideology

work in discourse is by “sustaining a (hierarchically) gendered social order.” She also explains that this attention to the way power and hierarchy is re-produced is pertinent at a time when issues of gender, power ideology are “increasingly more complex and subtle.” I would argue that the power dynamics in the online communities for sex buyers being examined in this research are not necessarily subtle. However, it may be that because we already have a preconception of prostitution and the sex industry, that the industry is highly gendered and patriarchal at its roots, we may be missing nuances in the discourse that are nonetheless very important for us to understand the way they work.

Lazar writes that in culture and in institutions “the studies show the complex and subtle ways in which taken-for-granted social assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, perpetuated, negotiated and challenged” (Lazar, 2). It is therefore not enough to assume the patriarchal nature of the rhetoric in the online communities and review boards; it is important to explicitly point out the dynamics at play and what they mean for gendered relations.

Critical discourse analysis is particularly useful for this research because, by definition, it requires that we admit our biases. It is not just reporting or documenting, but in fact, looking at the content with a social justice lens. Lazar argues “critical discourse analysis is known for its overtly political stance and is concerned with all forms of social inequality

and injustice” (Lazar, 2). She continues “it is paramount to understand that we are not merely doing textual de-construction for its own sake, but that the issues dealt with have actual material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific societies” (Lazar, 2).

Aside from that, Lazar argues that it is not enough to use critical discourse analysis but that we must also make an emphasis on a feminist perspective of critical discourse analysis itself so that we can more openly address the gender dynamics of the narratives we analyze. Lazar argues that “a feminist political critique of gendered social practices and relations is aimed ultimately at effecting social transformation” (Lazar, 6). When it comes to the online communities and review boards for sex buyers, we are identifying the way a gendered application of power is used to perpetuate an industry that overwhelmingly benefits men and male sex buyers at the expense of women in prostitution.

Although this thesis is not asking for a prescriptive “solution” to the problems that it highlights, I do believe that by making visible communities that are steeped in the “male sex right” (as explained by Paterson) and male entitlement to women and girls bodies, we will begin to get a better understanding of how the sex industry works and why it is thriving. Similarly, critical discourse analysis is honest in its intent that it does not aim to claim ‘objectivity’ or neutrality. On the contrary, it is

critical of the idea of neutrality to begin with. What critical discourse pursues is “an emancipatory critical social science which is openly committed to the achievement of a just social order through a critique of discourse” (Lazar, 5). When it comes to a feminist critical discourse analysis, the aim is similar but more catered to understanding gender dynamics under a hierarchy of oppression. Meaning “relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group” (Lazar, 5).

These relations of power that benefit men at the expense of women are, of course, produced and re-produced through diverse means, one of which is language and discourse. Lazar argues that gender ideology is hegemonic in the sense that we often do not notice its domination and the normalcy that hides it. Therefore, the relations of power are perpetuated largely “through discursive means, especially in the ways ideological assumptions are constantly re-enacted and circulated through discourse as commonsensical and natural. The taken-for-grantedness and normalcy of such knowledge is what mystifies or obscures the power differential and inequality at work” (Lazar, 7).

Holmes writes that “at the most global level, critical discourse analysis increases awareness of the reciprocal influences of language and social structure. More specifically, critical discourse analysis aims to describe the ways in which power and dominance are produced and

reproduced in social practice through the discourse structures of everyday interactions” (Holmes, 31). In this thesis, we are not examining what could be considered “everyday” interactions; we are in fact zooming in on online communities that most people don’t even know exist. Perhaps because the sex buyers who use the communities understand that they are not common knowledge, they are more candid with each other, which helps us with our analysis and deconstruction of the discourse.

- **Understanding Online Communities for Sex Buyers**

Why study online communities of sex buyers? Would they be an affirmation of old stereotypes of sex buyers or would they be full of nuance that could be useful for further analysis? Who are sex buyers, anyways? What do they think of the people in prostitution? All these questions were present on my mind as I embarked on this investigation.

Debates regarding prostitution either as an industry or as a so-called “social problem” have historically centered what market economists could call the supply side of the equation (Ekis Ekman, 2013) (Banyard, 2016) meaning that historically and culturally, society has been overwhelmingly concerned with the people (mainly girls and women) who make up the industry whilst the people who demand sexual acts in exchange for money remain both anonymous and forgotten.

A painfully perfect example of this paradox took place recently in the Dominican Republic. A non-profit organization called Plan International, whose efforts center children's rights (and girl's rights, more specifically), were introducing to the media the results of two separate studies that tried to address child commercial sexual exploitation on the island. The studies were damning. They showed that about 96% of children on the east side of the island were in danger of being sexually exploited (Plan International Dominican Republic, 2016).

Yet when asked about the reasons and causes of this harrowing prospect, representatives of the organization mentioned "the lack of education, physical, psychological and sexual abuse, domestic violence, dysfunctional families, teenage pregnancies and the lack of economic and social opportunities" (Casares, 2016). What about the people who are actually sexually abusing children (overwhelmingly girls) for money?

Within the study, the children who participated and were asked about the threat of commercial sexual exploitation, mentioned that the main party responsible for the problem was the government with over 50% of the blame. The second place was for the mothers and fathers of the children who are exploited. And at a very distant 3<sup>rd</sup> place, with 7% of the blame for the commercial sexual exploitation of children, were the sex buyers. Although the children are, of course, absolved of the blame for not

centering sex buyers in their assessment of responsibility, they reflect broader societal norms and ideologies.

For example, one might think that Plan International, being an organization made up of experts in this field, could include this critique in their own analysis at the end of the studies, but they did not. The basic idea that addressing the significant issue of sex buyers themselves is surprisingly missing from both the studies conducted by Plan International and the media covering the issue, and so the primary exploiters of children are practically invisible in the description and analysis of the problem. This example is merely a recent one to demonstrate how even in the direst circumstances (commercial child exploitation as interpreted by a non-profit child advocacy organization) sex buyers are granted, by omission, the very thing they desire the most: anonymity.

The logic of organizations like Plan International seems to assume that buying sex is an innate desire for men, too normalized to even be mentioned and, second, that the potential for sexual exploitation is a given. Conversely, abolitionists, led by survivor voices, argue that without demand there would be no supply (Malarek, 293) (Jeffreys, 59). Without the desire of some people (overwhelmingly men) to buy and pay for sexual services from other people (overwhelmingly girls and women), there would be no sex industry (Dworkin, 1993) (de Miguel, 48) By removing the sex

buyer from the transaction, we are left to assume that selling sex is an intrinsic aspect of being female that will take place regardless of the desires of a demand side. In the case presented above, we could theoretically “fix” every single one of the problems in the Dominican Republic (education, teen pregnancy, poverty and hunger) listed as causes for the high rates of vulnerability of Dominican children being sexually exploited, but without an analysis that acknowledges a demand from sex buyers, we would still be left with children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation (Roper, 2007) (Barry, 9).

Another example of how the debate has been handled is presented by Elizabeth Bernstein in her book, *Temporarily Yours*. She argues that German philosopher Georg Simmel’s analysis of the sex industry in his book, *The Philosophy of Money*, is “disturbing,” because it presents the sex industry as an industry in which “the nadir of human dignity is reached when what is most intimate and personal for a woman... is offered for such thoroughly impersonal, externally objective remuneration.” Bernstein is troubled by this analysis because, according to her, it makes the “assumption that the proper domain of women’s sexual expression was the intimate, romantic relationship in the private sphere” (Bernstein, 8).

I would argue that Simmel’s account falls short because it ignores the basic question of “who is offering remuneration for what?” and “why is remuneration being offered in the first place?” But Bernstein also makes a

leap in her reasoning from examining the sex industry as a commercial system in which money is the central component to making assumptions about women's sexuality that assume that selling sex is just another aspect of women's sexuality irrespective of the demand from men to buy sex from them. This idea is examined in detail by Ekis Ekman when she challenges the sex industry's advocates' attempt to make selling sex a sexual orientation so that demand for sex by men with money becomes even more obscured within women's studies theory and queer theory, thus completely erasing the elusive sex buyers (Ekis Ekman, 10). If prostitution is just another facet of women's intrinsic sexuality, then here we have a conspicuous case of women's gendered expectations working in natural synchronicity with patriarchy's own desires.

As Denise Thompson writes in *Radical Feminism Today*, "an ideology of desire, is an ideology of individualism. If domination is desired; it cannot be challenged or opposed" (Thompson, 43). Therefore, by making prostitution a matter of women's sexual desires, it is catapulted into the realm of the untouchable, completely removed from any systems level analysis that includes patriarchy and capitalism. It is a brilliant rhetorical jump, albeit a dangerously naïve one as we will discover in the analysis presented in this research.

My primary theoretical perspective in this investigation is based on the work of survivor advocates and feminist scholars, such as Andrea

Dworkin, Grizelda Grootboom, Rachel Moran, Trisha Baptie and the women who wrote essays for '*Prostitution Narratives*' (sometimes under a pseudonym), as well as the work of radical feminists who center patriarchy as a system of oppression and privilege that positions the bodies of women and girls as subordinate for the purpose of sex and reproduction to men as a class in a gender hierarchy. Among the work of radical feminists that guided my understanding of the sex industry is the work of Sheila Jeffreys, Kat Banyard, Kajsa Ekis Ekman, Janice Raymond, Meagan Tyler and Ana de Miguel.

de Miguel writes that "all social movements suppose the subversion of dominant cultural codes. But what makes feminism peculiar is that feminism, as pointed out by Kate Millett, defies the social order and cultural code which is *most ancestral, universal and ingrained* of all existent ones in all their manifestations." Feminist theory is fundamental in that it "questions all religious, philosophical, scientific, historical, anthropological, artistic sources, as well as the so-called common sense in order to detangle falsehoods, prejudices and contradictions that legitimize sexual domination" (de Miguel, 214).

We come to this research with centuries of a line of reasoning in which the word *prostitution* is synonymous with the word *prostitute*. Is it any wonder that both are so similar even semantically? To address those who pay for sex, we must make the jump to *sex buyers*. Interestingly,

Spanish speaking feminist theorists have found a way to bridge the gap between ‘*prostitution*’, ‘*prostitute*’ and ‘*sex buyer*’ by giving sex buyers the convenient name ‘*prostituidor*’ which is akin to ‘*prostituter*’. I should note that prostitution survivor and author Rachel Moran has begun to use ‘*prostituter*’ in replacement of ‘*sex buyer*’ but it has not taken hold in public discourse in the English language.

It might be important to remember again how philosopher Laura Torres challenges this passive understanding of sex buyers by writing: “The prostituidor has disposable time and money (indicators of wealth in society). They can make the rational decision regarding what type of prostitution to patronize (newspaper ads, street prostitutes, parlors, house services...) and veer their actions to solicit it. This decision forces them to postpone their desire, making sure that it adapts, for example, to the time of the month when they get paid or the possibility of creating an alibi for their romantic partner. In fact, most prostitution takes place in the morning, when they may incite least suspicion and therefore hide their infidelity)” (de Miguel, 176).

What Torres is doing is centering sex buyers as rational beings with a deliberate thought process that refuses to grant them either anonymity or abject passivity. Neither survivor advocates nor feminist scholars like de Miguel or Torres are willing to let adult men’s actions become invisible. One could easily argue that interpretations of sex buyers that render

invisible their thought process and rational decision-making sound eerily familiar to ancient, toxic masculinity tropes that observes sexual desire in men as an inexplicable and uncontrollable force; an analysis that has been thoroughly challenged in feminist circles, not only because it erases female sexual desire by positioning male sexual desire as uniquely sacred but also because of the way this analysis works hand in hand to erase criticism of sex buyers actions, which is particularly dangerous when looking at the intersection of sex buyers and violence against women and girls in prostitution. Raymond writes that “pro-sex work research has criticized studies documenting violence and exploitation of women in prostitution as one dimensional, biased and more advocacy oriented than evidence-based” (Raymond, 51). This approach is useful if we want to foment back and forth between feminists but not useful in actually ending violence against women and girls inside of the industry.

To address the importance of centering survivor voices in the debate, I’ll start with precisely that.

Grizelda Grootboom is a South African activist who recently published the book *Exit* about her experiences in prostitution. Today she is one of the most prominent survivor leaders in South Africa advocating for an end to the sex trade.

Grootboom says “survivor’s voices are critically important. It’s a hard balance sometimes with the frontline groups you work with. As a

survivor, you desperately want and need someone to support you, but we must also be at the table and respected. We didn't escape the pain and violence to stay on the sidelines and just tell our stories. NGOs need to use us intelligently; we know the sex trade network, the clubs, the pimps, the community, like nobody's business" (Grootboom, 2016).

- **Potential Bias**

Personally, I started reading and learning about this topic through the debates about human trafficking. I had some experience working on violence against women in an office where we tended to victims and survivors of gender-based violence every day. Although my work was essentially writing reports on the state of municipal offices in the Dominican Republic, I got to spend a lot of time shadowing lawyers and psychologists who would teach me about their experiences working on violence prevention.

After that, I did shelter work which also centers the needs and well-being of victims and survivors. This may explain why, the more I learned about this debate, the more I became increasingly frustrated with feminist debates about prostitution; they seemed far removed from the conversation that had been taking place for decades in the anti-violence movement. Most of it seemed entirely centered on what some feminist authors have called 'choice feminism' (Murphy, 17) and, at best, ignored a system level analysis and, at worst, this so-called debate was deliberately

silencing the voices of survivors. Given my background, doing either is simply unethical and unacceptable.

According to Canadian author Meghan Murphy, writing for *Herizons* in 2011, “choice feminism has co-opted feminist language in a way that takes the political out of the personal.” It arose from the language of reproductive rights: the right to choose to have an abortion or not. Because it pertains to such a fundamental aspect of women’s autonomy, it became a battle cry that unified feminist voices. However, ever since then, many feminists, but particularly liberal feminists in the United States, have broadened the scope of analysis to include other interactions under a patriarchal system without taking into account the uniqueness of abortion rights and the importance of choice within that framework.

Choice feminism “is one of the founding philosophical underpinnings of the modern feminist movement and the slogan in the fight for reproductive rights. Choice is the embodiment of the political demand for abortion. Historically, it was a liberating concept that represented women’s freedom and autonomy—not only in terms of their reproductive decisions, but also in more public aspects of life and society. Having the right to choose an abortion allows many women to feel they have a measure of control over their bodies and their lives.” (Murphy, 2012).

Yet when transported to the prostitution debate, ‘choice’ becomes an easy cop-out for sex industry advocates such as pimps, and crucially, sex buyers. In the review boards for sex buyers, it was not uncommon to hear men argue that they simply could not understand why a woman was in prostitution if she didn’t choose it out of her own free will with no understanding of how material realities and push factors work to ensure enough women and girls are prostituted at any given time.

All the more important that we listen to the voices of survivors themselves. What do they have to say about the industry? Why are they against the industry?

What Bernstein and Sanders consider to be a “condemnatory, moralizing tone in feminist guises” may conversely be interpreted to be the bold and brave empowerment of survivors to reclaim their own voices, lives and narratives based on their lived experiences. Survivor advocates argue that often when they come out to talk about their experiences in the sex industry, they worry more, not about conservatives or what society in general might say, but what pro-sex industry and ‘sex work’ advocates will do to them in order to discredit them and tarnish their reputation. This is unfortunate for a multitude of reasons.

If I as a researcher, were to somehow detach myself from my work, I could see that my background did not prepare me in any way to be sympathetic to the sex industry advocates’ position, which is an admission

of my potential bias on this topic. Having studied International Studies under a very strict set of university professors, I learned that when making an analysis of a situation or event, one must look beyond any individual-level analysis and focus instead on the larger, systems level understanding of any topic. Although at first I struggled with the connotations of my education at the moment, once I acquired a systems-level reasoning, it became almost impossible to shake off. When many feminists argue on behalf of choice feminism or when I encountered choice feminist arguments in my research (i.e. “she is here doing this job, therefore she must like it and find empowerment within it”), I simply questioned further. I understood full well that this line of argument was not only a neoliberal way of understanding human relations but also completely counter to the basis of what a feminist movement meant to dismantle male supremacy was supposed to be.

de Miguel writes that “patriarchal ideology is so deeply internalized, its ways of socialization are so perfect that the strong, structural cohesion in which women’s lives develop presents for many of them, the image itself of freely chosen and desired behavior” (de Miguel, 213). Choice feminism is, simply put, insufficient as an authentic feminist line of thinking.

The second aspect of my bias is that as a victim of molestation and sexual assaults, I cannot analyze the online communities for sex buyers as

separate from a system that has produced widespread violence against women and girls. Anytime a sex buyer argued in one of his reviews that “she was very pretty but she complained about being in pain, which I found very annoying since I have already paid”, I readily sympathized with the context of the woman in pain rather than with the entitled man who demanded “services” at the expense of a woman’s physical well-being. This thinking became further cemented in my mind throughout my time working on violence prevention and in shelter work

- **Process**

The questions of my research were ‘how do sex buyers talk about their experiences in the sex industry amongst themselves? How do they talk about the women they interact with in the sex industry? How do they construct their own sense of masculinity as sex buyers in the sex industry?’

To answer these questions, I read review posts from the English website for sex buyers Punternet and read the forum threads for sex buyers, also in England, UKPunting. I chose Punternet and UKPunting because they are the oldest review boards and online communities for sex buyers in the world. They are also reputable inside the sex industry, as escort agencies reference them when trying to promote the women working for them.

My main way of conducting the research was by creating screengrabs of the interactions that stood out to me and helped me create patterns. Because of the volume of information, I would self-select which ones had anything worth noting. Many of the reviews or online threads would say the same thing or repeat the same ideas and don't offer anything significant. They may vary in lengths but again, because of the volume of information provided by the online communities, I had to weed out anything repetitive and focus on patterns. So, for every screenshot that I captured, I had already examined about 4 reviews. By the time I was done collecting information, I had 800 screenshots meaning that I looked at about 3,200 reviews. This may seem like a lot but most reviews are short and concise. It also helped that during the time I was collecting information, I was methodical. I spent 6-8 hours, three times a week for about 6 months, looking through the online communities and review boards.

The review boards and online communities are anonymous and any demographic information about the sex buyers had to be either inferred or was gathered based on what they said ("I am a middle-aged man" or "I am from the south of Wales") when they chose to specify. The review boards and online communities have features that allowed me to look further into their other reviews and comments. I could see how much they had paid before and how often they paid for sex (and wrote a review about it). I

could also get a sense of the economic status based on how much each man paid for the encounter. A sex buyer paying £240 every month would appear to be in a much different economic situation than a man paying £30 pounds every three weeks. Occasionally they would reference their race and marital status but this was not prevalent enough for me to be able to gather significant demographic information about them.

While collecting the screenshots, I would make comments on what stood out to me in my thesis journal and map out areas that needed to be explored further. After I collected the data, I analyzed them and divided them into different sections or themes. Some themes had to be left out of the research for the sake of space as the online communities and review boards provided much to be interpreted.

Through the first three months of the research, I was also volunteering at a local shelter for people who were escaping gender based violence in the forms of domestic violence and sexual abuse. During the time I volunteered at the shelter, all of the cases centered women and children leaving abusive men. I continued doing the research regularly and in a disciplined manner: 6-8 hours on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays for about 6 months. At the beginning, I was surprised and frankly excited that the online communities provided a seemingly endless revenue of information. The material for my research seemed vast and

rich in a way that I could not possibly fathom with a set number of subjects if I were to do, for example, quantitative research.

At the time, my routine became a fairly methodical one. Every weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sundays) I would sit down for 6-8 hours and peruse the online communities where sex buyers talked about their experiences in the sex industry (both review boards and online forums), and I would write down in my notebook any themes that might emerge until I started seeing patterns. My annotations also analyzed the discourse and ideas that stood out to me in each review. In the review boards, it looked something like this: a sex buyer may have posted a review that I found interesting. I would compare the sex buyer's post with his previous reviews, if he had posted previously on the online communities, and I could contrast and compare interactions. What about this particular encounter warranted a negative review as opposed to a previous review that was positive? How does the sex buyer speak about women in prostitution when things go well for him as opposed to when things do not? I would also follow the link to the woman he was reviewing and read her other reviews by other sex buyers and what was available on her page (if she was working with an escort agency or self-employed). Was the review she obtained most recently a pattern or was it a random review outside of the norm? Does her performance in the review match her stated list of 'likes' on the escort agencies? If not, what was different?

Simultaneously, I would make screengrabs of all information that I thought pertinent to the research. Punternet was more accessible than UKPunting in that it allowed for a list that was updated with new reviews every day or two. When I talk in the thesis about review boards, I am referring to Punternet and when I speak of online communities, I am talking about UKPunting which has a more dynamic online forum.

As I mention in the introduction, both Punternet and UKPunting dispute over which one is the most reputable sex buyer forum. Both were useful in their own ways. However, neither of them provided demographic data on sex buyers. Unless specifically stated by the sex buyers themselves, it was impossible to know the ethnicity, race, or marital status of the sex buyers writing any given review or online comment. We could only make assumptions about their class based on how much money they could spend on something as superfluous as paying for sex.

This is the front page of Punternet and below is a screengrab of what a typical review would look like:

The screenshot shows the PunterNet UK website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Directory, Announcements Calendar, Reviews, Community Forum, and My Account. The main heading is "Welcome to PunterNet UK" with the tagline "The UK's oldest escort directory and review site" and "Established 1999". A paragraph states the site's purpose: "This site was created to facilitate the exchange of information on escorts in the UK. This web site aims to promote better understanding between customers and ladies in hopes that everyone may benefit, with less stressful, more enjoyable and mutually respectful visits." Below this, a list of features is provided: Escort Reviews, Escort Directory, Escorts' Announcements and Tours, and Community Forum and chat room. A disclaimer states: "Although there is no pornography here, this site contains material that is unsuitable for minors. This site is always 100% free to search for service providers, read profiles and reviews (including contact details), and view announcements of special events and tours. There are different types of service provider profiles available - please tell ladies you visit about this site! Reviews may be submitted on any UK-based female service provider, whether or not they have a profile here." A "Tweets" section by @PunterNetUK is also visible.

The second part of the screenshot shows a specific review titled "Review of Claudia of Perivale" (No. 119477 - Published 11 Mar 2015). The review details are as follows:

- Author:** [excessiveswine](#)
- Type of Visit:** Incall
- Date and Time of Visit:** Wed 11 Mar 2015 15:30
- Duration of Visit:** 1 Hours
- Amount Paid:** 90
- Recommended:** No

Links for reporting a concern or downloading a PDF printable version are provided. The "Details of Service Provider" section includes the phone number 07459707230 and AW Profile ID 2853724. A warning states: "WARNING - The 'adultwork' site has a long history of dishonest practices. Click here for full details. Please encourage genuine ladies to sign up for a profile on PunterNet." A promotional message asks if the reviewer is Claudia and encourages signing up for a Service Provider profile. The "Live Cam Girls" section mentions that live models are online and provides a link to their chat room. The "The Premises" section describes the location as a flat near the station, which is safe and basic. The "The Lady" section begins with the text: "Wasn't sure if she was the girl in the profile and foolishly still went ahead. It was soon apparent that, of course it wasn't the girl in the profile and what I had before me was a very average girl who is simply".

Many of the reviews, like the following, offered little information.

(All typos on review quotes are the sex buyer's):

*Jordana is young and claims to have one year experience she has a very limited repertoire. When I asked what she did not like she*

*rolled off a list of things some understandable others not. A punter can do much better than this one.*

*Was greeted with a warm happy smile, very tactile (I like that), nice conversation whilst kissing and foreplay, then a great BJ followed by a very wet session of sex. Very much recommended....*

*Wish I could have spent many hours with her. Thank you Jasmine*

*xx.*

These sorts of reviews are common although not particularly remarkable since nothing stands out in the context of all the dozens of reviewed to choose from. After a few initial screengrabs, I stopped focusing on anything that felt repetitive and tried to look for new ideas or angles to the online communities.

While certainly the sexual aspect of the research may be fascinating, far more interesting to me as a researcher was the possibility of analyzing the power dynamics at play and the commentary that sex buyers shared with each other, their thoughts and ideas about the construction of their own sense of masculinities, women in the sex industry, women in general, and sex itself. After all, the vast majority of the reviews and community threads only addressed the exact same four or five sexual acts, and the only thing that changed is the order of each sex act. Many reviewers were fairly utilitarian in their language (“*we did X act and then Y act*”) which also did not provide much to analyze yet the

review boards and communities offered countless opportunities to “zoom in” on a sex buyer and contextualize his most recent review to his past reviews and, for example, compare. This was an unexpected perk as I could compare what they had submitted as a negative review versus what constituted a positive review and their reasoning if they provided it. I could also see how much they paid for each encounter and try to find some traces of their life outside of the sex industry (social status, national origin, family situation).

After each day of research, I developed an automatic habit of turning off my computer (even if I needed to use it for anything other than research later), taking a shower, making some tea, and reading a historic novel for a couple of hours. This became part of my self-care and it became an axiom that in order for me to do the research, I had to be able to turn off the computer, put it away, take a shower and find some time to read something else afterwards.

Eventually however, around the time when I began teaching a class on my own in women’s studies to incoming first-year university students, continuing became unbearable. Sex buyers are not always violent, and they are not always overtly misogynist. Perhaps the fact that I never knew when or where I would find a violent or overtly misogynistic review added to the fact that I slowly began to resent the communities in a

fashion I could not anticipate beforehand. Towards the end of my writing process, I actively dreaded reading the words of sex buyers.

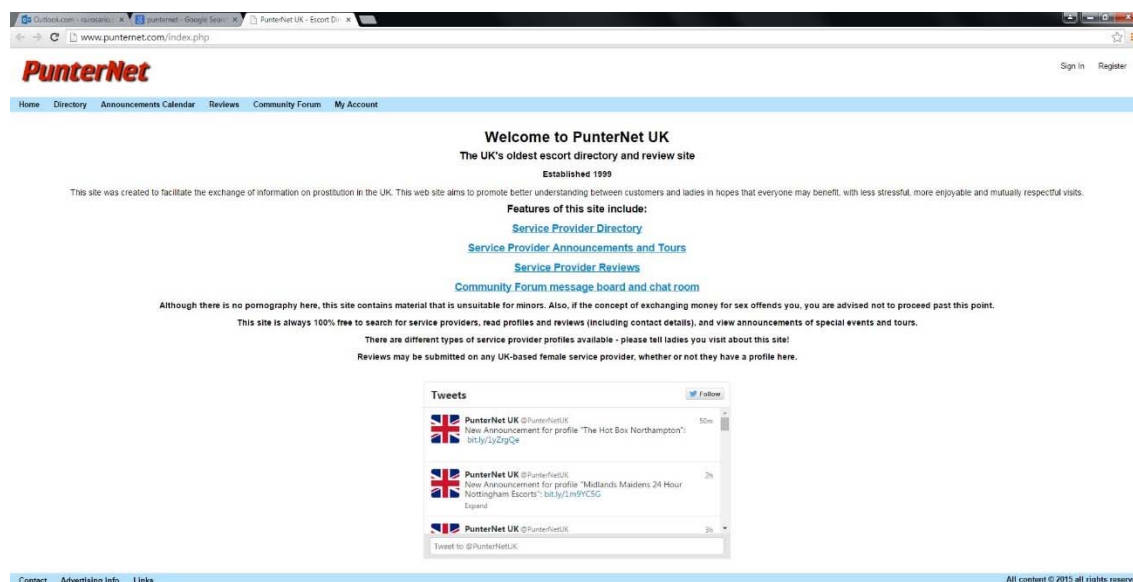
Working with my colleagues at shelter and talking with my front-line violence prevention friends, as well as a psychologist at my university, I realized that I had been carrying vicarious trauma. This form of trauma is characterized as taking some time to manifest itself and therefore being more difficult to identify initially. Vicarious trauma is common when working on a topic such as violence against women and girls, and violence prevention in general, when the primary recipient of violence is not yourself.

In my own life, this would manifest itself in the form of nightmares, an unprecedented level of anger at patriarchy as a system, heightened hostility towards what I perceived to be male privilege and a reluctance to interact with men in general.

However sympathetic some of the sex buyers may be (sometimes they are remarkably witty, funny and thoughtful), receiving the influx of information that I had been gathering every weekend, reading review after review, without seriously damaging either my own personal mental health or my relationship with men permanently, became untenable. This is the point in my research where I asked for a break and put the topic and the research on repose for a couple of months. When I came back, I

started the writing process on the research I had collected but in a less structured manner and without the intensive six to eight hour shifts.

## ANALYSIS



On October 31, 1992, feminist scholar, activist and former prostitute Andrea Dworkin delivered a speech at a symposium called 'Prostitution: From Academia to Activism' titled *Prostitution and Male Supremacy* in which she addresses, among other things, her understanding of prostitution and the way male supremacy is constructed "as a political system" to perpetuate the oppression of women and girls.

Although a theorist, Dworkin speaks in terms that can be easily understood by anyone. She chides the discourses that academia adopts to talk about prostitution because it often hides material realities behind elaborate rhetoric, and almost immediately after she begins her speech,

she confronts the audience with the reality of prostitution. Dworkin argues:

“I want to bring us back to basics. Prostitution: what is it? It is the use of a woman's body for sex by a man, he pays money, he does what he wants. The minute you move away from what it really is, you move away from prostitution into the world of ideas. You will feel better; you will have a better time; it is more fun; there is plenty to discuss, but you will be discussing ideas, not prostitution. Prostitution is not an idea. It is the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated usually by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man and then another and then another and then another and then another. That's what it is (Dworkin, 1993).”

Now, even though I spent over a year reading the words of sex buyers, I'll admit that this paragraph makes me deeply uncomfortable. At the same time, it is precisely because I spent over a year reading reviews and conversations between sex buyers that I cannot say that I ever saw a single review or conversation between sex buyers that did not involve what Dworkin is describing. Andrea Dworkin is absolutely right in describing prostitution in these terms, regardless of how uncomfortable and out of place they may sound in academia. Sex buyers understand her analysis as well, so I think it's time that we speak in plain terms about

sex buyers in the sex industry. To do this, I am going to construct my analysis by illustrating it with sex buyer's own words.

The first online review that caught my attention was written by a sex buyer who goes by the name of **'Thoroughbred'** (No. 160650). The appointment took place on Wednesday July 29, 2015 at 13h (1:00pm). He paid £60 pounds for 20 minutes. The woman was named **'Kate'** (probably a pseudonym) who worked for Anabella's at Milton Keynes. Just as this was my first time analyzing a review, this was her first time with a sex buyer, and that is probably the reason why it caught my attention, and I decided to write about it in the first place. 'Kate' was rated as a "No" meaning that this particular sex buyer would not "recommend her" to other sex buyers.

**'Thoroughbred'** described the premises as "usual place, usual high standards." 'Kate' is described as "tall, slim Hungarian blonde, enhanced boobs [sic]." The story is transcribed in its entirety. Note: I didn't change any of the typos or grammatical errors in the sex buyers' text:

This was a pretty poor punt actually. Kate was new on the day so I took a chance. I expected Kate to be pretty enthusiastic as most new girls here tend to be, but it was quite the opposite unfortunately. Kate's one of those providers who likes to control what happens. I was asked to disrobe and lay on the bed, which is fine but can tell straight away it's going to be perfunctory today. Kate had OWO listed as s service, but it was straight on with the

rubber. In fact, Kate has a new twist on this, as she still got the wet wipes out and wiped me down, before putting the rubber on. The she built up a base of wet wipes surrounding the bottom of my cock. Perhaps didn't want to risk touching any part of me with her mouth, but it was bizarre all the same.

From that point, I just went through the motions. I got a halfhearted BJ Kate leaving her hand on the bottom half of the shaft so a top half BJ facing away from me. I asked for 69 as the BJ was poor to move it on. Then full sex which was ok, but again she kept her hand down there preventing full access. She was pretty reluctant to take her own clobber off, even when I asked to take what she was wearing off she kept her knickers on.

I finished and there was 15 minutes left still, but Kate got up and it was clear she had no intention on [sic] doing anything else for me. I just chatted for a bit while I got my breath back, and upped and left with a few minutes remaining on the clock. Not the usual standards of this place, profile is more accurate now but too late for me.

Go see Kate if you like tall blondes with enhanced books [sic], but you can expect the bare minimum service wise.

[illegible]

For example, in the image above, we see that the first blue column on the image is the track number for the review. The second column is the alleged name of the woman being reviewed. The third column is the location of the transaction. The forth column is the escort agency (if they have one) that the woman works for. The fifth is the username of the sex buyer, sixth is whether or not they recommend the woman to fellow sex

buyers; 'yes' (in green), 'no' (in red) and 'neutral' (in black). And finally, the last column is the date that the review was entered in the review board.

There is a codependency between the review boards and escort agencies as the escort agencies often link to the review boards (only to the positive reviews, though) on the individual women's pages. This means that when a prospective sex buyer looks into any given agency and goes through the pictures of the women he would like to pay a visit to, he can click on her reviews to see what other sex buyers have written about each woman. If the sex buyer is clever, he could type the woman's name and her agency directly into the search engine at one of the online communities and get a full perspective that includes both negative and positive reviews. But if the sex buyer only looks at the reviews posted by the agencies, he will only read the most glowing ones.

When I started reading through the reviews, I was confused as to what some of the slang meant so I was directed through the online community forum to visit the 'Punting Wiki' and their Glossary (commentary on the Glossary is attached in this thesis as an addendum). The Punting Wiki website is a resource for incoming sex buyers who are new to the sex industry. It is written by fellow sex buyers and it becomes clear early on that this resource is meant to ensure that sex buyers get the most for their money, often at the expense of the women they are paying.

- **Sex Buyers' Reaction to Support Services for Escorts**

Sex buyers describe SAAFE (which stands for Support and Advice for Escorts) in the Punting Wiki as a website that has “factual information and (is) a well-used forum. It is for Escorts only. Some call the frequent posters there as 'The Sisterhood'. While not something needed for the new punter, at some point it is insightful to see how escorts speak of punters.”

The women at SAAFE describe themselves as “Independents supporting each other” and their forums function as a place where incoming escorts can find advice from more experienced escorts and support. The women at SAAFE write “This site is the result of collaboration between a group of experienced escorts. It could have been called, "If I knew then what I know now!" as it brings together a range of information and advice to help cut short the learning process in a business where experience really does count. It is not designed to be an authoritative guide, merely some words of wisdom mixed with a bit of humour.”

There is a thread in the online community forums at UKPunting titled ‘SAAFE.’ On August 12, 2011, a sex buyer who goes by the username ‘**Hogan**’ wrote “Ive [sic] read that site and find the utter contempt some of the prossie "mentors" have towards punters is shocking. All very worrying since that site is so often recommended to newbie prossies.” To which a fellow sex buyer named ‘**Kirp**’ replies “Welcome to

the real world. I find that my opinions posted in this forum do not get held in contempt. UKP has far more members than saafe forum.” A couple of back and forth later ‘**NIK**’ chimes in to say “Who would want to see any of the fat old has beens [sic] in the SAAFE hierachy [sic] anyway is beyone [sic] me.” ‘**James999**’ writes “The Site is just a bunch of Fat old Has Beens, [sic] who see pretty young girls as a threat to their income” and “Remember SAAFE stands for SAD AND AGED FAT ESCORTS.”

It is important to read how sex buyers speak about SAAFE among themselves because SAAFE is as close to a “sex worker’s rights” organization as these online communities get. It appears to be a place where women who refer to themselves as escorts and who work in prostitution find commonalities with each other, provide advice and most importantly, teach each other safety information. From the perspective of the women, it is crucial to find support and camaraderie while they work in the industry and according to sex industry advocates, this camaraderie among “sex workers” is one of the benefits of a legalized or decriminalized system of prostitution.

However, the response from sex buyers reveals that sex buyers hold this solidarity among women in the sex industry in utter contempt. Which poses some serious questions to those advocating for policies that benefit sex buyers.

Another thread on UKPunting is titled ‘SAAFE: Punters who dare to expect sex for the whole time.’ The men on the thread complain that SAAFE encourages women to “get away” with wasting time and not having sex for as long as the men want.

‘**Daffodil**’ writes that he spent some time on the SAAFE website and is “fed up” because “they’re slagging off punters who dare to want sex for the whole time they’ve paid for! Guys who do not cum on cue or pull back from climax are derided and even blacklisted.” He is angry that on the SAAFE website “the consensus seems to be that we’re there, at least in part, to pleasure the prossie.”

The entire thread is a fascinating read into the mind of sex buyers so I will reproduce certain paragraphs. Again, all typos and grammatical errors were left intact:

‘**Daffodil**’ continues: “Some blatantly state the tricks they use to make guys cum sooner. Are they forgetting they are the service providers? I’m not really that fussed if they thoroughly enjoy themselves. If it’s important to them, however, I am happy to take payment and provide the service. It would be like restaurateurs complaining that customers are coming in, paying for a meal and expecting a meal! I am sure they would love me to pay for an hour, wank myself off for 5 minutes whilst they tell me about their maff [sic] or siense [sic] degrees and then leave.

Delusional.” Note how in his comments, the language of labor is used to the detriment of the women in prostitution, not in favor of them.

To which **‘softlad’** replies: “It never ceases to amaze me that some deluded punters think Ho's actually enjoy meeting us... There maybe [sic] the odd exception to this rule, but I'd say 85% would prefer you to simply walk in leave her donation in a sealed envelope, then walk out... That's what one said previously isn't it ? Fluffies my [sic] delude themselves that they are different because they treat 'em with respect....Wake up and smell the coffee chaps. Nothing the skanks could say on any pro\$\$ie site would surprise me. Most are hard nosed [sic] money grabbing two faced bitches, and punters would do well to remember this.”

A ‘donation’ is defined by the Glossary as a euphemism for money and a ‘fluffy’ is a sex buyer who thinks “too highly” of the women he pays for sex.

**‘Kundalini’** says: “I find that reading Saafe typically puts me of paying for sex for a couple of months. The contempt for clients is breath-taking. And the near total lack of interest in sex is another striking feature.”

**‘Matium’** offers the following insight: “Saafe is an antidote for those punters who think prostitutes actually care.”

Interestingly, Rachel Moran wrote in *Paid For* that she didn't agree with the idea that indoor prostitution was better than street prostitution. During the seven years Moran spent in prostitution, she worked in every area of the industry which is also a rebuttal of the myth that there's no mobility from one area of prostitution into another. Moran argues "an understood street rule had always been that the encounter was over when the client climaxed, but now (after legalization in Germany) we found ourselves alone in rooms with men who were paying by the hour and wanted every minute of their money's worth. I found this new form of prostitution to be *more* dangerous and *more* degrading, not less" (Moran, 94). There are of course pros and cons but Moran's perspective may explain some of the time management decisions that women make in prostitution... or as sex buyers call them "time wasting tactics."

- **Guides for Sex Buyers: Outsmarting the women**

Sex buyers may have a very negative view of SAAFE for being an online community for escorts where they share support and advice but they themselves enjoy a general camaraderie amongst themselves. The front page of PuntingWiki provides several links and "Featured Pages" that serve as guides and advice to fellow sex buyers, particularly new sex buyers.

One of the lists is simply a step-by-step guide on how to become a sex buyers and how to make sure you get the best out of your encounter

for the money paid. Among the tips offered to prospective sex buyers are “Use a punting phone or sim, don’t be tempted to use your own or business phone just in case.” The reasoning behind this is to make sure that they don’t get caught by their partners, spouses or business relations. They also recommend always paying cash and creating a separate email account under a fake name that is used exclusively for paying for sex.

Other advice is tailored to the event itself. For example, sex buyers are advised to cut their nails “if you expect to do any fingering” and to shower thoroughly as this will guarantee a longer fellatio but (bizarrely) they are also told to not worry too much about showering so “don't feel like you have to spend 15 minutes in there to impress her.”

Some of the advice is health oriented. For example, sex buyers are warned repeatedly throughout the online communities and review boards to never do “bareback.” The sex buyers who wrote the guide warn “Avoid girls who advertise bareback (unprotected vaginal and/or anal sex). Don't play Russian roulette with your life.” This advice sounds benign until I entered the review boards and saw that the overwhelming majority of sex buyers insisted on oral sex (both fellatio and cunnilingus) without a condom as well as kissing on the lips. It was extremely rare to read a review in which a sex buyer didn’t demand all three. And it is clear that the vast majority of them do not enjoy paying for sex if the oral sex is protected.

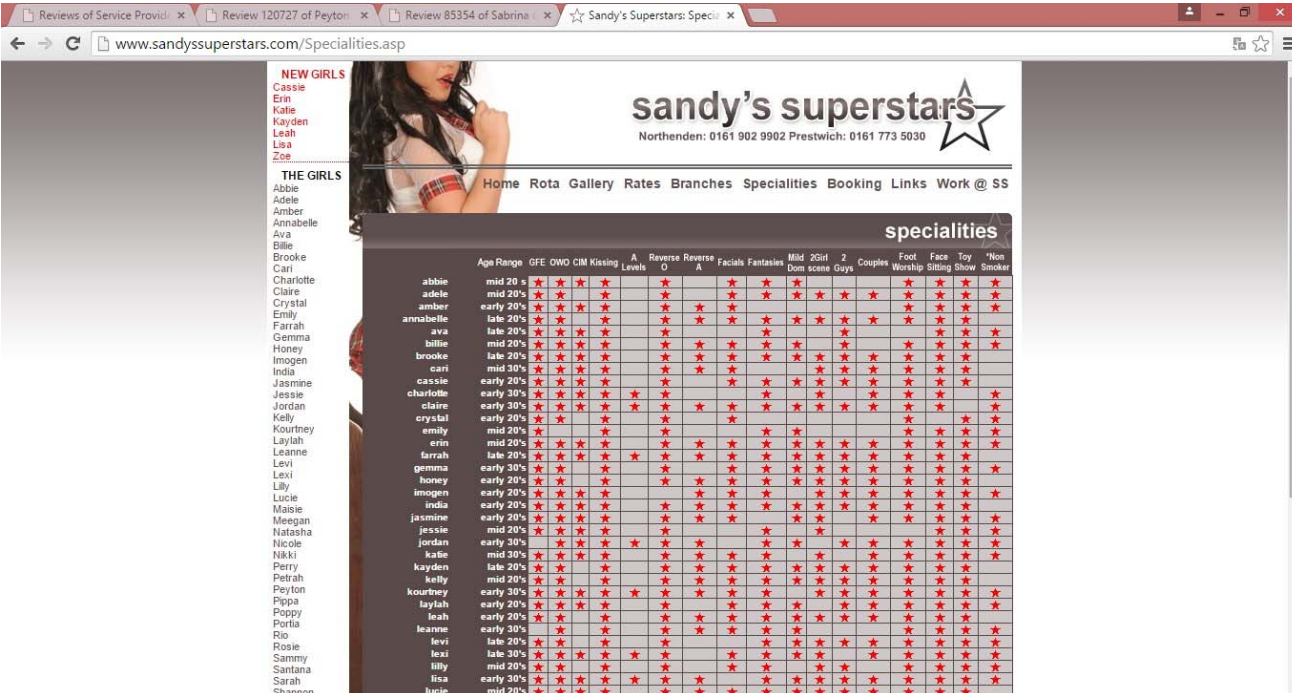
For example, a sex buyer who goes by the username ‘**DvonR**’ reviews an experience with ‘**Analise**’ (No. 118319) as follows: “Had a shower but all downhill from there. OWO (oral without a condom) was not on offer despite request. Poor covered bj [sic] which she sought to terminate after 3-4 minutes. Asked her to continue which then resulted in lengthy change of condom for some reason. Clear that she wanted to finish as soon as possible.”

Compare this experience to another sex buyer, ‘**TeeJay**,’ who writes in his review of ‘**Michaela**’ (No. 123362) about the oral sex without a condom thusly “so I lay back and enjoyed five minutes of OWO during which time Michaela took my cock deep into her mouth and proved yet again that she was a true professional and new [sic] exactly how to suck a mans [sic] cock...I knew I was going to really get my monies [sic] worth and I was not disappointed!”

Wearing a condom is a must for vaginal and anal sex but the overwhelming majority of fellatio that is reported in the online communities happens without a condom. Needless to say, sexually transmitted infections can result from kissing, oral sex (either way) and to an extent from any sort of contact with unprotected genitals, not just penetration. The reputable sexual health organization Planned Parenthood says that the risk of contracting HIV from oral sex is lower than through penetration but that oral sex without protection carries the

risk of other infections like “herpes, syphilis, hepatitis B, gonorrhea, and HPV.”

Escort agencies almost exclusively “advertise” women who offer oral without protection. For example, Sandy Superstars is a popular escort agency among sex buyers in the review boards. On September 17th, 2015, they had 52 escorts working for them. All of them women. Out of the 52 women, only 1 (‘Emily’) did not offer oral sex without a condom. When it came to ‘RO’ (reversed oral, cunnilingus) also 1 of the women ‘Imogen’ did not offer cunnilingus as a service.



The screenshot shows the website for Sandy Superstars. On the left, there is a list of escorts under the heading 'THE GIRLS'. In the center, there is a large table titled 'specialities' that lists various services offered by the escorts. The table has columns for different types of services, with stars indicating which services each escort provides.

	Age Range	GFE	OWO	CIM	Kissing	A Levels	Reverse O	Reverse A	Facials	Fantasies	Mild Dom	2Girl	2 Guys	Couples	Foot Worship	Face Sitting	Toy Show	'Non Smoker
abbie	mid 20 s	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
adele	mid 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
amber	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
annabelle	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
ava	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
billie	mid 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
brooke	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
carl	mid 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
cassie	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
charlotte	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
claire	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
crystal	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
emily	mid 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
erin	mid 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
farrah	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
gemma	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
levi	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
lexi	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
lily	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
lucie	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
imogen	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
jasmine	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
jessie	mid 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
natasha	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
nicole	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
nikki	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
perry	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
petrah	mid 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
kourtney	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
peppa	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
poppy	early 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
portia	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
rio	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
rosie	late 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
sammy	late 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
santana	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
sarah	early 30%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
shannon	mid 20%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

The one time I did encounter ‘RO’ (cunnilingus) with protection, the woman received a bad review. It was written by a sex buyer named ‘worldpunter’ who was reviewing ‘Nyah’ (No. 9884). He complained that

'Nyah' was not as forthcoming as he would have liked. He says "I was not getting an erection due to her poor performance so far. I asked can I give oral [sic], "with a dam," she replied, "have you ever tried it?" I have to admit I have never come across this before "banana flavor", she said." His conclusion? "My first and last time of RO with a dam. Damn that dam as she had a nice looking pussy." He considered it an "unexciting punt" and describes having trouble having an erection as a result. When she suggested that she could give him oral sex "with a condom, of course" he wrote, exasperated, that he felt like he was getting "an I.P. guide to safe sex" and concluded that from that point on he will only accept oral sex without protection.

These interactions call into question one of the key arguments made by sex industry advocates regarding safety. Ekis Ekman investigated many so-called "sex worker's rights" organization and found that most of them function as a cover for pimps and brothel owners or more generally, as a sex industry lobby (Ekis Ekman, 2013). One of the ways the lobby has managed to access spaces where it would not be welcomed if they stated openly that they are, indeed, representing sex buyers, pimps and traffickers is by adopting the rhetoric of HIV/AIDS prevention (Ekis Ekman, 54). Ekis Ekman writes that after the 1980's epidemic when the gravity of the situation had become clear "governments and international agencies made large sums of money available for HIV/AIDS prevention

programs”. Thus, many of the most well-known “sex worker’s rights” organizations today were established with funding intended to go to prevention programs for safer sex. This funding comes from government agencies such as the European Union and private foundations like the Rockefeller Center.

Some of the organizations like the Network of Sex Work Project, TAMPEP and COYOTE (Ekis Ekman, 55-58), argue that their goal is to teach safety skills to people in prostitution, but all three of them campaign for either the legalization or decriminalization of prostitution, and none of them offer alternatives in cases where prostitution want to leave the industry. This is relevant for several reasons, one of them being that when “sex worker’s rights” organizations talk about ‘safety’, they are usually referring to condom use, and as we have seen, sex buyers are not keen on condom use.

But also, by centering condom use as the main safety precaution, these organizations do not address the actual primary safety concern for people in prostitution: violence from sex buyers. Not a lot of people know this, but every year since prostitution became legalized in the Netherlands, a woman has been murdered in the red-light district precisely behind the display windows where the rooms are located. The media loves pictures of Amsterdam’s famous red windows, but they always forget to mention that the windows have an adjacent room where

the sex being paid for takes place. The women must pay rent for the room each night and, based on the rent rate of the display windows and rooms, in order to break even, they have to see a minimum of three clients each night (Ekis Ekman, 2014).

In the case of the women murdered behind the red light district's display windows, as well as in the sex industry as a whole, it is sex buyers who are committing violence, but most organizations declaring to care for the safety of people in prostitution do not mention this fact and solely focus on the logistics of how to put a condom on a man's penis which, it turns out, sex buyers do not want anyways for about half of the sex acts that they demand in prostitution (Ekis Ekman 72-76).

Advice for prospective sex buyers also centers the idea that what's most important is to get the sexual experiences they are expecting, even if sometimes that means outsmarting the women they are paying for sex. Among the most popular "guides" on PuntingWiki are 'Prostitutes Tactics To Make You Cum Faster' and 'Prostitutes Time Wasting Tactics.'

On the first one, 'Prostitutes Tactics To Make You Cum Faster' the sex buyers who write the guides inform "This is a guide to the tricks prossies use to make the man cum faster. The reasons for doing this vary. Some reasons include: to shorten the booking, because they do not enjoy the company or simply to provide a bad service." Next is a list of the

“tricks” a prostitute might use and “how to avoid” the woman getting away with it.

Among the “tricks” they describe are ‘Constant Hand Jobs,’ ‘Dirty Talk’ and ‘Clamping’ which is described as something that happens “when you are having penetrative sex with a girl” and the woman is using her pelvic muscles to accelerate ejaculation and shorten the time of the appointment. The sex buyer wrote that in his experience “few prossies do this” but is clear when they do. Sex buyers are encouraged to “change position as many times as possible to get more bang for your buck” and to firmly “but politely” state that the sex buyer is not enjoying it.

Other tips include “It is your paid time, not theirs. Be polite and respectful, but do not get taken advantage of” and “If they complain you’re taking ages; write that in a field report (a review).” Both sentences make it clear that the purpose of the sex industry that they are patronizing with their money is to foster more male entitlement. In the communities, and more specifically in these guides, it is evident that sex buyers are exclusively interested in a sexual experience. This contradicts Sanders assertion that the sex industry is more about sex buyers desire for “a deeper sense of self through the feeling of belonging” or “a holistic experience” than the sexual experience itself (Sanders, 92). In the guides, sex buyers show that they are keen on making “the most” of their money

even if that means having to use tactics that supersede the women's wishes.

The guide 'Prostitute Time Wasting Tactics' begins with "A booking is usually a set length of time and the prostitute won't need to work as hard if she spends less time doing sexual services." They discuss how during an appointment prostitutes may use the introductory conversation as a way to shorten the actual time they have to have sex. The guide informs that for many prostitutes an introductory chat is useful because it works as an icebreaker, which is understandable but they warn against "prossies" that "talk for so long it cuts time in half and there's no time for the sexual positions you want or even orgasm."

The men are therefore encouraged to shorten the time of the talk and set the conversation time to about 10 minutes. They are warned to look out for "prossies talking excessively, with little or no real focus on you (such as sitting far away)" and for women who are changing subjects quickly or who "often talk more about herself than you." Another piece of advice is to wear a cheap watch and to "show her the watch before your time starts" so the woman knows she is being timed and has to do as told for the entire time. The men who wrote the guides never discuss why is it that so many women in prostitution resort to tactics that minimize the time they have to spend with the men paying for sex.

- **"Lesbianism" As Performance For Men**

During my investigation, there were no reviews in which the sex buyer was a woman. And although many women are advertised as being interested in sex with women, or more often than not, as “bisexual” this same-sex experience is usually male centered. Curiously, in the list of services the women offer, the language used is “Will Entertain Women” right along with “Will Entertain Couples” which doesn’t particularly sound like the height of same-sex attraction.

Escort agencies often advertise ‘Duos’ as part of their rota. Meaning that out of however many women the agency has working at the moment, sometimes women chose which other women they prefer to work with, allegedly. It may be that they genuinely like each other or because they are friends or have good chemistry. For example, ‘**Ruby**’ and ‘**Nadia**’ are advertised in ‘House of Divine’ with this description:

“For a pan european [sic] tour of lust, sensuality and general naughtiness, for heaven's sake call now and book Ruby and Nadia. Both girls really enjoy each other's company and they would like nothing more than to be joined by you for a steamy no holes [sic] barred session in Milton Keynes. Not for the faint hearted.”

This same-sex attraction becomes rather convenient for men like ‘**labialover**’ (No.122447) who writes that paying for both women was “a belated birthday treat” for him. He says “From the moment the girls entered the room to the moment they left they were in constant contact

with each other and me” and comments on how amazing it was that “there were episodes of RO on each girl, both by me and each of them” and concludes that this was “a great session with two fantastic ladies who were focused on my pleasure and their own.”

To put this in perspective, I took a look at what happens when these “lesbian” experiences don’t go as planned for the sex buyer. I found a review of both ‘**Melanie**’ and ‘**Abbie**’ by ‘**JuanitoAlimana**’ (No.111679). He writes that he was flying home soon and wanted to have a duo experience before he left. He was pleased that they were wearing the outfits that he had requested (schoolgirl) but that the experience went downhill from there. He wanted oral sex without a condom from both at the same time but “they are not really into girls and it was more of a tag team where one will play with me while the other took a rest,” he writes, so he ended up having sex with them individually.

After the sex, they had some time left to chat a bit “and somehow we end up in some sort of argument about how bad their job was.” He states “I did not want to be confrontational, but I did not want them to complain either about sometime [sic] I was hoping they were enjoying.” Despite the setback, he writes that he still asked for another hand job “but there wasn’t enough time and it did not feel good enough.”

Another ‘lesbian’ experience that was disappointing for a man, was the one ‘**Jeff101**’ had with ‘**Alexa**’ and ‘**Lena**’ (No.122036). So disappointing

that he ended up writing an impressively long negative review consisting of a whopping 1027 words! He writes that he had some “very enthusiastic texting prior to the appointment with the agency” who promised him “Lesbian show! Hot girls, DFK, OWO!” He writes that upon entering the room the women were welcoming but that when he commanded them on what to do, they were unresponsive. “Why don’t you two get started while I get undressed and I’ll watch for a little,” he asked them. He clarifies “the lesbian show, I meant of course” but his demand was met with blank stares between the women.

He proceeds to take his clothes off “while the girls stand around vaguely, occasionally checking their phones.” While he is trying to get some sexual action going between them, the women start talking to each other “in Romanian” which is what sex buyers often say when they actually mean they were speaking a Slavic language in general. Personally, I think ‘**Jeff101**’ sounds a little indignant that the women are not putting on a sexy, lesbian show for him when he writes “I suggest fucking Alexa doggy. It’s OK, but I have to SUGGEST to Lena that she joins us on the bed and that she STROKES my balls instead of standing on the other side of the room” and that “Alexa’s phone pings and I notice she HAS IT IN HER HAND and is texting WHILE THE CLIENT IS FUCKING HER and is not offering A levels even tho [sic] the website suggests she would.”

Nevertheless, and in spite of the fact that they are both clearly uninterested in both him and each other (talking to each other and texting on their phones) he asks 'Lena' to have sex with him. According to him she looks "a bit miffed but changes my condom and lies down resignedly."

When Alexa told him that they were running out of time, he told her that he could have another orgasm "in TWO MINUTES if she just GIVES ME A WANK (I'm determined to get my money's worth)" and that he thinks she gives him a reasonable hand job "spurred on no doubt by my promise" to ejaculate quickly. Note that the women have already made it clear that they do not want to have any sort of sex. But in the sex industry, money buys consent therefore '**Jeff101**' owns sexual access to their bodies for whatever amount of time he paid for, which goes back to Moran's argument that buying an allotted amount of time puts the women in the compromising position of having to perform for the whole time.

'**Jeff101**' ends his review thusly "Lena looks on. I wonder if I'm going to come. I'm damned if they're going to get away without doing SOMETHING. I fantasize that I'm on a desert island with naked nymphs pandering to my every need and that they will toss me off whenever the whim takes me, I gaze at Alexa's gorgeous profile as she looks across the room while she wanks my cock, I study the shoulders and breasts of these gorgeous sullen creatures who are taking all my money and wasting my time and their time. I come."

The lesbian or “duo” experiences are well-reviewed as long as it is clear that this is a performance done to arouse the men, not each other but that in order to arouse the men, they have to *pretend* to be into each other. As soon as it becomes apparent that they are not really interested in each other, the men react negatively. This casts some doubts on the validity of escort agencies that advertise women claiming to be “bisexual” or the ubiquitous “Will Accept Women” among their services. When a person is being paid to perform a sexual orientation for someone else, how much can be inferred about their authentic desires?

- **“Discounts”: Women On Offer**

Most of the women in the review board for sex buyers work through an agency, although some of them have separate pages that they put up themselves, allegedly, on AdultWork.com. Most of the women change from one agency to the other or work agencies simultaneously only changing the days of the week, sometimes their names and even on occasion the nationality that they present.

Oftentimes the agencies offer ‘specials’ or discounts. There are also parties in which sex buyers pay an entry fee and get to have sex with multiple women for a lower price than if they paid for each individually. ‘**readytodance**’ reviews a ‘**Phoenix Party**’ (No.123220) saying “Candy was one of 5 girls at this well-known party venue. I have been going for a while now and I am always impressed by the attractiveness of the girls and how

they really seem to enjoy themselves. Party [sic] just seems more fun and exciting than solo visits to girls.

Candy comes down from Leicester and is clearly here for the excitement of multiple men. If you have never tried a party, this is the one. What could be better than 5 girls for £160 ??”

Most escort agencies are, as mentioned, highly gendered in a binary that assumed all sex buyers are men and makes sure to note that the people offering sex are women. Aurora Escorts writes on their ‘About’ page at Punternet “If you are searching for a friendly and beautiful girl to spend some time with do not look farther. Our London Escort Agency has a portfolio of more than 60 amazing London Escorts which will satisfy every need. Blond Escorts, Tall, Petite, A level educated, Brazilian, Mature, Naughty, Fetish, Busty Escorts. You name it we have it. To book a girl just call.”

A Twitter page for London Escort Agency (@supremeangels) tweets out “Do you want your balls licked and your helmet flicked?? Supremeangels.co.uk. Juicy girls want you” along with a phone number, making it clear what the gender dynamics of their operation is.



Each woman has a page with professional pictures of herself, which are supposedly verified by a photography agency that assures the sex buyer that the woman in the photos is indeed the real one. They also have



a short introduction to the woman's "personality", her basic stats and measurements and the services that the woman told the agency that she offers.

For example, 'Michaela' has a description on her website that reads "Michaela - \*NEW\* to Annabella's proven to be quite the little minx in

MK! Come and loose your self [sic] in the delights of Michaela a petite beauty with a completely flawless figure and a very naughty smile. Michaela speaks perfect English... she also knows how to make sure you leave a very happy man.”

‘Michaela’ was reviewed by ‘TeeJay’ (No. 123362) who writes glowingly, “These agencies have so many beautiful girls to work though, but Michaela will definitely be on my list of girls to revisit. If there is a bad side to Brexit, it will be the loss of sexy East European brunettes with hearts of gold! While I am sure there are many British ladies that can fill the role, I just hope they get what good sex really is about like the Romanians do.”

Another example would be ‘Lilly’ who works for Northampton’s Premier Massage Parlour. At the time of my research she was new to the industry and was being introduced by the agency thusly:

“This naughty blond student is a must for any gents “To Do List”. Delivering a fresh and playful girlfriend experience, she is only 19 but already has an amazing repertoire. ‘Lily’ is a deliciously saucy little minx and is a flower you’d definitely want to pick from our hot line up.” Her details said that she was 19, her height was 5’5, was a size 10 and 36DD and her nationality is listed as being British. Among the services she supposedly told the agency that she offers are GFE, OWO, FK, Role Play, Watersports, Tie and tease, COB, RO, Mild Dom, 2 Girl, MMF, Spanking,

Toys, Foot fetish, Rimming and College Girl. They do note, however, that all her services are fully inclusive in the price but are at 'Lilly's discretion.

Which is exactly what a dismayed '**david1969**' discovered when he reviewed '**Lily**' (No. 120725). He writes that although she is the same woman in the pictures and is quite young, she doesn't really offer any of the services listed on her website. He writes "She does not do DFK. This also means that a true GFE is not available. She also does not do toys at all. She was reluctant to do OWO and after a perfunctory go started she will put a condom on as she stated she doesn't do CIM (either)... This lack of skills and services is not what you expect from a lady who and I quote "has an amazing repertoire." She did allow reverse oral but complained she was "very sensitive due to fucking men all day". Not the best thing to tell a punter even if its [sic] true. Unfortunately, the sex was performed without any great effort on her part and to say she was loose was an understatement. I am not the most well endowed [sic] but to say there was room for another would be kind. I think that all that coupled with her inexperience/youth and the fact that she was more interested in looking at herself in a mirror to check her makeup, etc. means I would NOT recommend. Sadly although she looks stunning and she really is very good looking, her performance, lack of service and attention to the client means she is NOT worth seeing."

Similarly, ‘**Olivia**’ states on her website (or more likely what the Agency wrote for her) that she likes to swallow, and does CIM, GFE, WS, DFK, 2 Girl Interactive, Massage, Toys and Uniform. She is described, also by Annabella’s as being “\***BRAND NEW**\* Olivia is a sweet British escort with a thirst for sexual passion. This beautiful girl has the most delectable blue eyes and a smile to die for.” However, ‘**Marco592**’ (No. 120804) had a different experience with her. He writes that although being a regular at Annabella’s, he decided to try out the new girl. He says “I specially booked her as it was stated cim (come in mouth), swallow which I really like. None was offered and very poor BJ as well. No kissing, poor BJ and no cim and swallow. Will not recommend.”

In this comparison between what the woman tells the agency that she is willing to do and what a sex buyer reports on her immediately after she became affiliated with the agency, we can see that it is possible that the women list “services” in order to get the job but once they are alone in the confinement of the room with a sex buyer, that is where they can negotiate what they are actually comfortable with. It may be that ‘**Lily**’ was having a rough day and other sex buyers would recommend her after having a great experience with her, but it does raises the question of how much leeway do the women have to make sure they can both keep the job they need and also resist having to do sexual activities they feel uncomfortable with.

- **Negotiating Consent**

When speaking about the escorts he sees such as **'Kelly'** (No. 122035), **'volvic'** describes her as "Mid-20 Romanian! Long hair, saggy tits and sun-hatch where she had had THREE kids out of! Latest only 4 months ago." During a review of **'Samantha'** (No. 119078) he refers to her as "all over a decent package" and comments that she has "soft, smooth "teeny" skin and lovely pert tits, which were firm yet soft to touch, you know how they are at that age when they have not seen any "kiddie" action!" **'volvic'** is a bit of an outlier when compared to the rest of the sex buyers. He almost exclusively always pays for 15 minutes, the average he spends each time is £39. He also has a recurring fascination with figuring out whether the women had children and would comment on the state of their cervix in every single review that he writes (except when the women would not allow fingering).

I've always been confused as to why a sex buyer who pays for sex so often such as **'volvic'** (about every 2 weeks) and only pays for 15 minutes, doesn't just save for a month and pay for 30 minutes which is well known to grant a better service. Women who get paid for 15 minutes are almost always reviewed negatively not only because the experience is fairly basic but also because the more a woman gets paid, the more privileged she is. Therefore, the less money she is paid, the direst her economic needs. Yet it

seems **'volvic'** never figured that out (or does it on purpose) and insists on paying women for 15 minutes, or as is sometimes known “a quickie.”

The reviews of men like **'volvic'** were among the most difficult parts of the research because they reveal the structural power that the men have with respect to the women they are paying. One on occasion, he wrote about his experience with **'Sisi'** who he describes as “a small, petite Bulgarian girl with slightly saggy tits but smooth skin.” She is 22-years-old and told him when he arrived that she had a 6-year-old son in Bulgaria (No. 119922).

**'volvic'** described his experience as “very bad” overall. **'Sisi'** had a lot of boundaries with him, which is a general pet peeve for all sex buyers in the online community and review boards. Among the complaints he had were that initially she wouldn't take her clothes off. Once he convinced her to do so, she wouldn't let him touch her nipples, would not let him give her oral sex, would not let him finger her vaginally and would complain saying things like “don't lie like that, don't twist me, Ow I have a pain in my back!”

These boundaries on her part, make it clear that she does not want to have sex with him. Yet this does not stop **'volvic'** from coercing sexual positions and trying to push through her boundaries regardless. Like many sex buyers who are unhappy with the way their sex buying experience is going, **'volvic'** claims he himself wants the experience to be

over saying “come on finish, only 15 minutes you know. Pass me the phone so I can check the time!!” But what is remarkable is that none of the men ever leave. It is the men who are keeping the women in the room through the use of money, so if they truly want the experience to be over, all they have to do is say so and the women would immediately stop and probably leave.

When a ‘punt’ isn’t going the way they want, the men often complain about what a miserable experience *they* are having yet they never stop requesting more sex from the uncooperative women. In short: they “bargain” sexual consent with an unwilling partner. What these negotiations reveal is the flaw in the logic of the argument that assumes that by paying money up front, consent can be given. The missing link here is that money, as the form of power that it represents, has always been coercive.

Tong argues that under a Marxist feminist understanding “when capitalism is viewed as a system of power relations, it is described as a society in which every kind of transactional relation is fundamentally exploitative.” Sex buyers like ‘**volvic**’, having internalized the idea that the women are, in fact, tools for pleasure (the utilitarian “service providers”); they never pause to consider whether this negotiation of consent is harmful or problematic because in their mental frame, women have become the purchased commodity, not the living human being with a clear

set of boundaries. It is almost as if, in the review boards, money negates boundaries.

This disconnect leads to deeply unpleasant situations such as this, in which ‘**volvic**’ describes the best part of his experience with ‘**Sisi**’. He writes “The only good bit was when I needed to cum (no chance in that pussy), so whipped it out and wanked myself as she lay on her back with her legs either side of me. Oh Dear . . . Oh Dear . . . just as I spurted my 10 days of spunk from my cock, the condom fell off the end and a 30cm plume of spunk shot out all over her belly, her dressing gown, the bed and dropped down onto her pussy. RESULT! That will teach you, you b\*\*\*h. Then she got narky [sic] and told me I owed her an extra tenner now for what I had done. On your bike! But was quick to put my clothes on and leave before her PIMP turned up with a baseball bat or something. Saw no evidence of either, but you know what I mean!”

Sure, ‘**Sisi**’ accepted the money but does this transaction take into account the push and pull factors that made her leave Bulgaria? It seems to me that the commodification of consent serves men like ‘**volvic**’ far more often than it serves women like ‘**Sisi**’.

- **The Rights and Responsibilities of Service Providers**

As we can see in the case of ‘**Sisi**’, what ‘**volvic**’ paid for was not a transaction on equal footing where ‘**Sisi**’ could set boundaries that she

found appropriate while he requested what sexual access she was willing to grant him; what he paid for was access to her body regardless of how she actually felt about it for a fixed amount of time. From the perspective of a sex buyer, ‘**volvic**’ is clear that *his victory* was in trespassing the boundary she clearly did not want to be trespassed.

Another example of this negotiation is an interaction with a woman named ‘**Ariana**’ (No. 118221) who was described as “Romanian” with a “teenage girl” body type. ‘**volvic**’ writes that he has been a sex buyer for over 15 years but his interaction with ‘Ariana’ felt like one of the most blatant rip-offs. He writes “After a big struggle(!) managed to get her to take off her clothes! Got her to lie on her back so I could lick her pussy. Kept pushing her hips down to the bed, so I could not really get the measure of her pussy.

OK, sex. NO, NO, NO, NO What do you mean NO? I have sucked your cock and you have licked my pussy, so you cannot have sex as well. Sorry? Where did that one come from. [sic] YOU promised me! I called you! I paid you extra cash! No, YOU have had what you paid for! Sorry, this is a rip-off. You never mentioned that the money we agreed was for oral sex (badly, as it happened) only! Sorry, but not sex!

I asked her what her name was and she said she did not have one (I knew I could find out from the website, but . . .) I told her I would write bad [sic] about her on internet and she just babbled at me in Romanian (I guess?).”

The first thing that is worthy of note here is that although ‘**Ariana**’ has made it clear she does not want anything to do with him, ‘**volvic**’ doesn’t take no for an answer. Outside of the sex industry we would understand this as sexual assault or rape. How come the same definition does not apply here in this experience between a sex buyer and a woman in prostitution? Who exactly benefits from this utilitarian understanding of women?

The reason for his insistence is that he assumes he has paid for a service, and as such ‘**Ariana**’ is expected to deliver. I would argue that ‘**volvic**’, as with most sex buyers on Punternet, have internalized the narrative that “sex work is work” which many sex industry advocates promote under the banner that if only we understand prostitution as work, the workers will somehow have rights. What gets conspicuously left out of this analysis is that while work may carry some rights, it also carries responsibilities from the workers. ‘**volvic**’ expects sexual access to ‘**Ariana**’ because her body has become quite literally the product in this transaction. As the product being offered, she has the responsibility to continue to perform to his liking which is what he, quite explicitly, paid for. He is baffled and outraged that she would react with human agency; such as the ability to say no and to refuse to perform because that is a human capacity, not an utilitarian one.

de Miguel argues that sexual autonomy is “the right to set clear delimitations to the access to our bodies” and that having this autonomy is crucial not only in that it gives people the power to deny access but also the power to define what constitutes a violation of the boundaries of sexual autonomy (de Miguel, 166). She takes her analysis a step further and theorizes that in prostitution, the “sex of prostitution” requires a commodification of sex to the point that no barriers can exist and that extends beyond the physical access to one woman or girl’s body but the boundaries of sexual access to colonialist, racist and imperialist forces.

In the idea that consent can be commodified, all sexual access can be bought with money which in turn reproduces not only gender inequality but class inequality among countries. de Miguel writes with irony “Is your family going through economic troubles? Send your young women to Spanish brothels! We would appreciate if you sent the prettiest girls! Don’t worry, in a couple of days we’ll teach her how to please a Spanish guy... a guy, his father and his grandfather” (de Miguel, 167). It doesn’t take much research to figure out that although never expressed as explicitly as de Miguel does, this mentality is already in place in the global sex trade.

- **“I Paid For This!”: When Entitled Men Don’t Get What They Want**

In the online communities for sex buyers, it becomes clear that once we treat women as “service providers” and sex as a service, the buyers

who see themselves as the rightful client make marketplace demands on women.

Survivor leader and the founder of Survivors4Solutions Autumn Burris writes in *Prostitution Narratives* that during her time in prostitution, her well-being became irrelevant once she was bought and sold in the sex trade. To the point where sex buyers didn't even bother to ask her about bruises on her face. Burris writes "after once being beaten beyond recognition I was later picked by men, and not one of them asked me if I was all right or refrained from purchasing my body" (Burris, 138). This is because Burris body had already become a commodity to be used in an economic transaction. Its jarring to think that nobody would be decent enough to talk to her about the bruises, but it is wholly in line with the mentality of the online communities to dehumanize women to the point where their own subjectivity as people becomes relegated to the "service" their bodies can offer and how compliant they are to perform reciprocity for the sex buyers.

Another review that illustrates this thinking is written by 'alias84uk' reviewing an experience with 'Amy' (No. 115580). He begins the review with an all caps sentence "AMY IS NOT INTERESTED AT ALL!!!" He explains that she was not responsive throughout. "She does not talk and does not want to do her job, she is very awkward and pulls away/pushes you away whenever you try to touch her" to which he adds

“which makes me feel uncomfortable to be with her” meaning that although he is trying to have sex with a partner that clearly does not want to be with him, it is his feeling of rejection that trumps her feelings of not wanting to be touched.

Despite feeling uncomfortable that he is being openly rejected by a woman who doesn’t want to have sex with him, he asks for oral sex. He complains that he paid for it without a condom but she did it poorly, leaving him to asses that this was the worst experience he’s had in a long time.

What about **‘Amy’**? The reactions that **‘alias84uk’** described are consistent with the detachment that clinical phycologist have found prevalent in most women in prostitution. The detachment is what allows most women and children in prostitution to carry on with the sex they are being paid to perform but keeping a sense of self intact. Jeffreys calls it “dissociation” while Ekis Ekman calls it “the split self.” In this scenario, it means that although **‘Amy’** was in the room with him and was performing some of the sex acts unwillingly, in doing things like not letting him touch her and refusing to speak with him, she was protecting her own sense of self. Her silence and rejection was in itself an act of resistance.

Another man who regretted spending money on what turned out to be a terrible experience for him was **‘PunterJohn’** who reviewed his experience with **‘Alena’** (No. 117672). He says that she was very good

looking but that he regretted the punt the second she asked for more money in order to provide a “girlfriend experience”. This amounted to “a bit of perfunctory kissing, no owo and no reverse oral. Not like any girlfriend I’ve ever had.”

It didn’t get any better when ‘**Alena**’ told him she couldn’t have vaginal sex because his penis size was uncomfortable for her. She then told him that “when she used to work in Germany (she’s Eastern European), if she had a well-endowed punter she told him ‘no’ and would return his money or get another girl to service him.” But on this occasion, she said ‘but now I need the money’” to which ‘**PunterJohn**’ replied “WTF!” He still asked her for oral sex and insisted on penetrating her. He writes that he “managed to get it in part of the way with her hand preventing it going in any deeper and not allowing any change of position” so he left feeling fed up and this became *his* worst experience.

- **“The Girlfriend Experience”: sex-buyer’s ideal woman as a service**

Sex buyer ‘**u\_go\_girl**’ describes “the girlfriend experience” when reviewing ‘**Lia Amelia**’ (No. 116346) as an encounter that includes “eye contact, soft kissing and tenderness.”

‘The Girlfriend Experience’ is perhaps the most popular request that the men in review boards have. They write often that although they understand that they are paying money, they want to believe that they are

not. The girlfriend experience is explained as “an escort experience like being with a real girlfriend. There is no agreed list of services included, but you expect kissing or DFK, oral sex (without a condom) and full sex.” I would say without a doubt that the vast majority of sex buyers either asked beforehand for a girlfriend experience or wrote in their review how they felt the experience went in the framework of a girlfriend experience expectation. This does not negate the analysis put forth by Dworkin at the beginning of the chapter that contends that prostitution is about sex. What the girlfriend experience does is that it dictates very explicitly the ways and manner in which the sex has to be conducted in order to meet the requirements of the transaction set by sex buyers.

**‘Randyoldgoat1’** describes his experience with **‘Sue’** (No. 120460) as a proper girlfriend experience. He says “Sue makes you welcome and relaxed - nice to talk [sic], cuddle and kiss at the start - great oral technique. Likes 69. Any position sex. She really seems to enjoy the session and it actually feels like a true relationship, proper girlfriend rather than mechanical routine clock watch sex.”

This all sounds wonderful for all involved but it made me wonder... a girlfriend is not always pleasing. As human beings, a “true girlfriend” is not compliant all the time and does not desire to please whenever they are asked to do something. What happens when the woman who is being paid to act as a girlfriend, reacts well... like a girlfriend? What happens when

they don't agree with something, or feel uncomfortable with a sex position? What happens when "the girlfriend" in "the girlfriend" experiences behave like a human being?

**'jabbadastak'** found this out when he visited **'Tiffany'** (No. 122634). His review starts with "This is how the worst punt I have ever had started..." He goes on to describe that he loved **'Tiffany'** on her agency's website because she had "big tits" which are his type. So, he called the agency and talked to the owner (a man) to book the appointment.

He was disappointed when he saw her in real life because she didn't look as thin and young as the woman in the pictures. Things didn't get much better, he says. When he laid on his back to receive oral sex he says she told him straight away "don't touch my hair!" **'jabbadastak'** says "okay, I said as I lay there, hands by my side. The OWO was hardly oral at all, one or two licks, followed by shuffling back and forth on the bed over and over. Clearly she's not into her work or pleasing the customers." The man at reception apologized and promised **'jabbadastak'** that he would "have a word" with **'Tiffany'** but couldn't refund him. His review ends with "So I was basically charged £45 for 10 mins of "no hair touching", "no leg touching", "no kissing" service from Tiffany and I didn't finish. Complete rip off." And, of course, a very negative review of **'Tiffany.'**

- **'I am getting married!': A sex-buyer receives advice on marriage**

A sex-buyer whose username is ‘**lovesamummy**’ is very, very excited to be getting married. He decides to tell the rest of the forum at UKPunting that from that point on, he won’t be able to keep paying women for sex and wants to bid farewell to the community. His message reads “Yeah so no big deal, but I won't be on here again I don't think [sic]. Been fun, but I think I've got all the granny banging put [sic] my system (hope so anyway) and I'm getting married. Lovely girl, I genuinely believe in monogamy and she's the girl of my dreams. I wish you all the best guys, thanks for the advice, encouragement and slaggings [sic] over the last couple of years. I may lurk occasionally for the laughs, but other than that, I'm back in the real world. Lovesamummy out!”

The response he got from his comrades was not positive at all. They mocked him and laughed at him for wanting to stop being a sex buyer. ‘**Travis**’ replied “Haha, yeah I thought that too! Just don't be too proud when you do start punting again, keep sharing bro! There are things that we just don't want to do to our wives, it's because we love them!” to which ‘**Scothorn56**’ responded “He'll be back the only question is how long it'll take!! The problem with monogamy is that it gets well Boring after a while and the lure of fresh pussy takes over. It's not cheating, like having an affair would be, it's not an emotional association at all or shouldn't be its just paying for variety you can enjoy for an hour or two and then go back to your "real life".”

Three men replied with congratulations and all three were banned from the forum which shows the policing aspect of the communities. One of them, DG was banned for being “a white Knight” which is a term that the Glossary describes as “popular internet slang for a forum member that rushes to defend a prostitute after she has been reviewed negatively.”

The rest of the thread was filled in jokes about how ‘lovesamummy’ will go back to being a sex-buyer and how they are looking forward to his ‘review’ of his new wife. Later in the thread ‘lovesamummy’ came back and wrote:

Hey guys, the skepticism is very understandable. I'm not going to argue with you guys. I have made a choice. I appreciate that there will be temptation in the future, I guess I shall wait and see. My wife to be is 26. Two years older than me. :)

I've only posted because I wanted to in advance explain my absence. I promise one thing though, if I ever do start punting again (and I wont) [sic] I will review as always. Pride I get.... But it's not like anyone here knows who I am, so what is the point of pride. Believe it or not, I want to start a family and all that good stuff. The punting and I guess all the women I've ever slept with was me sewing my wild oats. These oats are now well and truly sewn I think.

Anyway, it feels right, sorry to get fluffy (not something I'm known for on here) but I do love her immensely. She's a real bonnie lassie and very open minded and adventurous sexually. I'm in a good place at the minute so I have high hopes for a long and happy life. Now just to wait till that dam itch kicks in. Oh, and thanks for the congratulations guys. It is something to celebrate, no matter how much you all think I'll fail. Hahaha

Some of the men pointed out that it was hypocritical for him to assume that he would “change” after marriage if after all, he had been going to prostitutes when engaged. Then the conversation turned into a back and forth over whether paying for sex was cheating or not.

**‘Firebird’** said “If you're married and you go out and shag a prossie then you have cheated on your wife, simple as that, regardless of what you think that is officially cheating, no matter what phrases you say to justify it to yourself you are cheating” to which **‘mavgoose’** replied “I do not feel I am cheating. It is not an affair. I don't take my wedding ring off. I'll admit to a working girl I'm married. (if asked) it's a service. Florist for flowers. Barbers for haircut. Roll shop for lunch. Working girl for sex. Seemples [sic].”

The conversation devolved into a very personal and heated argument between the men, some calling each other “delusional” for thinking the sex industry doesn't constitute cheating and others saying

that sex is like hunger and arguing that their wives wouldn't want them to be hungry if they didn't pack a lunch. Other men simply wished 'lovesamummy' congratulations but included in their message pictures of naked, elderly women, in honor of 'lovesamummy' sexual preferences, which I think is about as thoughtful as conversations in these online communities get. The conversation ended with 'Marmalade' saying "Just put yer [sic] wifey's AW (adult work) link up when you've finished with her. We can all do sloppy-seconds reviews and be more... ahem ...objective."

- **"Review your OH like a WG, not as a real human being with feelings": A thread**

One wonders, if the men in the online communities are so interested in having "intimacy" and "real passion" with women, then why don't they try to find a loving partner who wouldn't need to be paid? The stereotype says that men who pay for sex have trouble finding partners or commitment issues but in the online communities they often talk to each other about their wives and girlfriends. The myth that sex buyers are lonely men in need of "companionship" is just that: a myth.

Sex buyers created a thread titled "Review your OH" which stands for 'other half'. Sex buyers were asked to "review" their partners (wives and girlfriends) like they would review a woman in prostitution. Meaning, what did the "establishment" look like (their house or apartment) and how

much they paid (meaning how much money they had spent in the relationship).

Sex buyer **‘wheeliebinwanking’** clarifies “this thread is for reviewing you OH (other half) like a WG (working girl), not as a real human being with feelings...” then he included the ‘laughing out loud’ emoji. It should be noted, in case it wasn’t blatantly obvious, that the implication on the thread is that “working girls” are therefore not “real human beings with feelings”.

What do fellow sex buyers said? How did fellow sex buyers review their significant other?

**‘jackthelad’** writes:

Tall, slim chinese girl. Early 30s looks younger. Obviously has had kids. Actually not bad looking. After sorting out the paperwork, paying the mortgage etc, I went for a shower. Came back with just a towel and found her to be lying on the bed on her side facing away from me. Not a good start! I prodded her and asked her shall we have some fun? She begrudgingly said ok. Gave her a kiss but she kept her mouth closed so no dfk.

Moved on to lick her nipples. Totally unresponsive. Tried further south. Nicely shaved at least and no smell. Ha ha. Tried my best with some oral action. Some light moaning and she starts to

get a bit wet. Here we go! Tried some fingers but was blocked.

Carried on with oral until I think she came or she just didn't want any more [sic]. Asked for a bj and she went down on me. Pretty average. Not much suction but some ball licking which was pretty good.

On with the Mac and we go at it mish. She starts to get into it a little with a few light moans but a bit of a cold look staring at the ceiling. Tried to kiss her again but still no fk. Kinda give up and pound her as hard as the position will allow which is difficult as she positioned herself so I cannot get fully inside her. I cum and she goes to shower. She comes back onto the bed and rolls over. I let myself out to go down the pub.

And that brothers, is why I punt.

After reading this 'review' of his wife, as I researcher, I was curious as to what would constitute a good experience for **'jackthelad'** because that way I could get a sense of perspective and understand what exactly was it that he was after when it comes to sex. So, I looked into his older reviews (a feature of some online communities, some require an account but some don't) and found a review he posted for a woman who works in the sex industry named **'Courtney'**. **'jackthelad'** wrote "Services included; owo with a bit of hand, ball sucking/licking, ro, protected sex. Made lots of noise during ro which was off putting but she did get rather wet after a while

and started to moan properly. She was shaved and tasted fresh. Also allowed fingering. Not sure if she came before I got tired though. Fucked in doggy and mish. Very cooperative to my needs regarding positions and asking her to lick my balls some more.”

I find it very interesting that with his partner he complained that she was unresponsive and only engaged in “light moaning” but with a paid prostitute he complained that she “made lots of noise during ro (cunnilingus)” and that he found that off-putting. Which is it, **‘jackthelad’**? Does he want women to enjoy sex or not? How precise does the moaning have to be? These specific sets of expectations of what female sexuality must look like for the purposes of building the sex buyers own sexual persona and arousal is not uncommon. In this thesis, I argue that these demands for a detailed control of women through the purchase of women’s bodies for sex is at the core of not only the “male sex right” but the existence of prostitution as a system that subordinates women.

A fellow sex buyer whose username is **‘fredpunter’** replies to **‘jackthelad’** that his significant other “sounds like a raging nympho compared to my Missus. Maybe she is saving herself for what she gets up to while you are at the pub.” To which **‘jackthelad’** replies “Report so we know to avoid.” (Meaning he asked **‘fredpunter’** to write a field review of his wife like she was a prostitute so that the other men would ‘know how to avoid’ going to see her.” After a back and forth, **‘fredpunter’** complies

and writes of his wife “Grudging blow job about every four weeks ... never initiates, always manages to position herself so that her entire bodyweight is concentrated thru [sic] her elbow into my spleen ... no CIM ... costs about 15000 pounds just in home improvements .... to be fair though, she does wash my knickers so she's not all bad.”

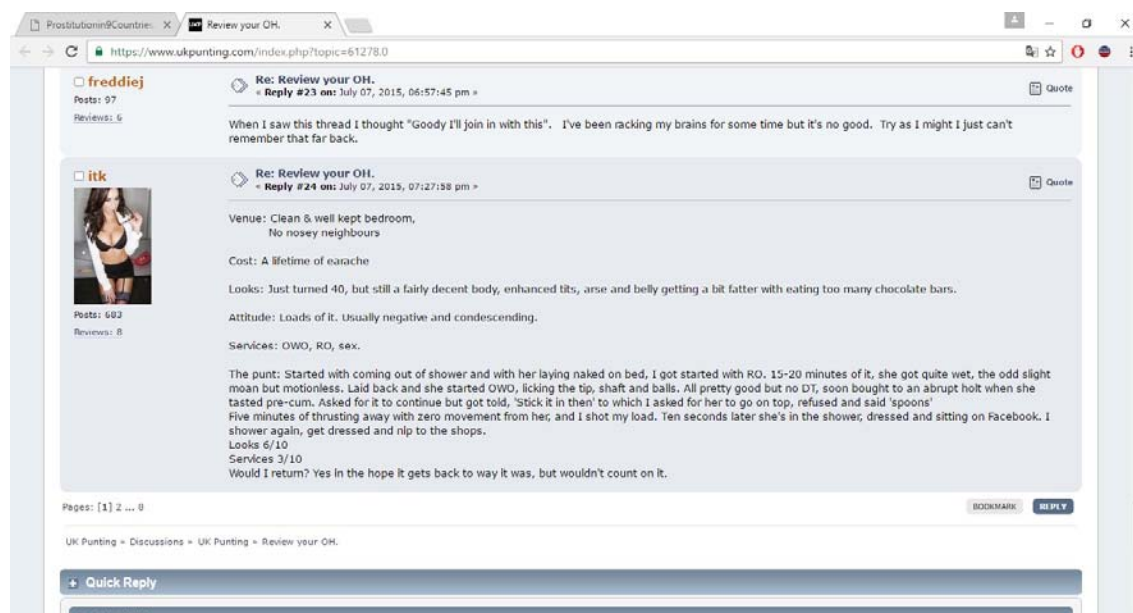
Keep in mind that we have zero clue what the context for the sex life with their significant other is. I would be willing to bet that men who are so full of male entitlement and toxic masculinity that they are willing to use women’s bodies and consent as commodities do not make the best life partners but the men never even mention what they have done to make their significant others want to have sex with them; they just assume they are somehow “owed” sexual access.

Theoretically speaking, this view of the role of women in marriage is not backwards or regressive, it is in fact the root of marriage as an institution in society. Australian scholar Meagan Tyler writes in *Freedom Fallacy* that “historically, it was seen as impossible for a man to rape his wife as she legally abdicated her sexual autonomy when she signed the marriage certificate. Her consent was implied for the rest of her married life” (Tyler, 194). The argument is not as far back in the past as we might think, either. First, we can find the mentality that assumes marriage equals sexual access to a woman’s body nowadays in the online

communities. Second, this mentality is particularly prevalent in marital self-help books and marriage counseling (Jeffreys, 66).

In *Passionate Marriage*, Dr. David Schnarch (a therapist) writes his advice for a patient who said she was feeling pressured into having sex with her husband. Schnarch explains to her “You may have to choose between having sex and not being married... Yes, you feel “pressured” to have sex. But the pressure is part of your choice. You agreed to monogamy- not celibacy” which Tyler argues that this type of advice lays bare “how integral sexual access to wives is still deemed to be in modern marriage” (Tyler, 195).

I would argue that when sex buyers rate and review women both in and out of prostitution, and whether they identify them as “service provider” or “wife”, it all connects to the “male sex right” which could be placed at the root of the sexual subordination of women under a patriarchy (Jeffreys, 65). Whether in prostitution or in their marriages, according to the views expressed by sex buyers in the thread and in online communities in general, women belong firmly in their roles as the second (female) sex “who exist to serve the first (male) sex” (Tong, 111). Like Ekis Ekman, author of *Being and Being Bought*, has said “In patriarchy, women exist for men and in capitalism, the poor exist for the rich. You combine those two, what do you get?”



- **Ethnicity and Nationality as Commodities**

All agencies that I looked at list the alleged nationality of the women along with their eye color, dress size, their 'likes' (the list of sex acts that they are willing to engage in), and alleged sexual orientation. The sexual orientation would only be 'straight' or 'bisexual' with none of the women listing 'lesbian' as an orientation, which may indicate that the agencies are fully aware that the demographic who visits these websites are heterosexual men.

The nationality of the women in the sex industry is also questionable because it changes, sometimes quite often, along with their names. A woman who goes by '**Allie**' with one agency for a couple of months, may appear on another agency as '**Rebekka**.' The men know this and sometimes help each other find a specific woman who has changed

names. For example, ‘**Nodiggity**’ started a thread titled “Has anyone seen **Iara, Carmen, Karmen** of various escort agencies?” He says that he has looked for her everywhere but can’t track her down. Fellow sex buyers help him search until they find her. This wolf pack mentality may easily turn problematic if the sex buyer was a stalker or someone that the woman deliberately wished to avoid or escape.

Some agencies claim specifically to “cater” to sex buyers looking for a particular ethnic background. For example, Asian Selection prides itself in hosting a variety of women from different countries in Asia including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thailand and Singapore. But it is likely that the women who appear as Japanese on one agency may appear as Korean in another soon after. After all, the industry revolves around a constant influx of “new women” but what this means is that they often rotate or gravitate from one agency to the other until they leave the industry. The men don’t notice because they don’t really care what specific country the women are from. Sex buyers are interested in “the experience” of being with a woman from a particular country based on ethnic stereotypes they have regarding said country.

The flexible shifts in ethnicities and nationalities comes handy if your actual nationality has acquired a terrible reputation, which is precisely what happened to Romanian women.

‘Romanian’ is often used as a derogatory inside joke among sex buyers in the online communities. For example, ‘**titus**’ says in passing while doing a review of ‘**Leila**’ (No. 118608), who he believes is Hungarian, that she has a southern European look with unblemished body and that she “beats the Romanian girls with their constant stories of hardships.”

PuntingWiki offers a ‘List of decent London Romanian Girls’ because they argue that Romanian women have acquired a reputation for being vocal about their hatred for the sex industry and for talking “too much” about hardships back home. The list says “this is not a list of recommended Romanian girls. Instead it is a list of those Romanians advertising on Adultwork who are not skanks and who try to offer a fairly decent service.” Simply put, ‘Romanian’ women in prostitution are accused of not doing enough to cover the economic factors that leads the vast majority of women to the sex industry.

‘**smokemonster6969**’ writes in his review of ‘**Bianca**’ (No. 122461) that the woman’s disappointing performance was due, in part, to her nationality. He says “so OWO was crap... and don’t touch this don’t touch that then followed... no real interaction or passion and was so obvious was [sic] there just to take money ...asked if I could cum twice and she told me so long as I was quick... When will Romanian girls learn that a service provider should provide a service? All in all, a terrible punt and apart from big tits she not has [sic] much else going for her.”

It is fairly common in the reviews I've read for women in the sex industry to be immigrants who don't speak the language of the sex buyers, in this case English. The men usually don't care as long as the woman is able to have a minimum level of small talk.

A thread on UKPunting was started after a sex buyer noticed that many 'Romanian' women were suddenly working on his hometown. Fellow sex buyers like '**Scoobs**' writes "There's a load [sic] turned up in Edinburgh over the last month or so as well. Wouldn't touch one with a ten-foot-long shitty stick" to which '**rpg**' responds "No me neither! My punts are now hassle free since I've started seeing Brits or native English speakers only. (apart from Amily of course, who's Thai)."

Someone asked '**rpg**' why he has such a negative view of 'Romanian' women and he replies "in my experience.. [sic] liars, whining moaning fuckers, not interested. I do see lots of good reports from the soft South though. Maybe you get a better class of EE down there" and "**Scoobs**" also chimes in offering "Add Barebackers, Bait & Switchers, STI-riddled shitbags who are more likely to have been trafficked than most other nationalities. And there's a decent chance you'll get robbed by one of the fuckers [sic] pimps/boyfriends at the door or as soon as you're inside too. Avoid like the fucking plague (some will probably have that as well)."

Coercion and trafficking is a common assumption about 'Romanian' women. '**Jimmyredcab**' writes "Anyone who thinks a Romanian girl could

come to London unaided and set herself up on adultwork plus rent a flat are not just deluded they are in denial. Some of you are just interested in the cheapest rate, I prefer seeing girls who are not being pressured into seeing 12 punters a day in a 16-hour shift.”

- **Human Trafficking for The Purposes of Sex: A conversation between sex buyers**

A thread on UKPunting asks “Why do so many Romanian girls do bareback sex?” (meaning vaginal or anal sex without a condom). ‘**ALyons**’ writes “I don’t get it. About 60% of profiles on AW (Adult Work) are Romanians in London, so many of them don’t offer FK (French kissing) but are happy to take a cock without plastic on and shove it inside their money slot. That makes no sense.”

Fellow sex buyer who goes by the username ‘**CBPaul**’ replies “They probably don’t. Sergei (slang for an Eastern European pimp) ticks all the boxes and writes (copies) the profiles, the prossie hasn’t a clue. It’s the same reason why they won’t offer kissing, owo (oral without a condom) and anal and won’t look like the girl in the pictures.”

Continuing the conversation about ‘Romanian’ women and human trafficking, sex buyer ‘**rolf32313**’ describes how trafficking works for the rest of the community:

I think the answer is simple and if you have to ask maybe your [sic] burying your head in the sand. A significant number of these Romanian girls are brought over here under false pretense's (PA, modelling... job). When they get here they have their passport taken and are told they owe the pimp £x,000 and need to start paying back and the only job is prostitution, they are then subjected to violence to ensure their compliance.

Now Sergei doesn't give a shit about the girl as he will move her on in a few weeks anyway so just like a hire car he wants to thrash the crap out of her in the time he has her. For him BB is a way to get more clients and thus more money from the girl so he tells the girl that she is now offering BB. The girl is probably ignorant to the risks but quite frankly the risks of saying no to Sergie are significantly more life threatening and immediate than the risks of having 1000 high viral load HIV+ guys creampie (ejaculate in her vaginal/anal canal) her in quick succession. Their [sic] are indie's who also offer this and I suspect it's market forces, sadly BB sells. This is why I don't see Romanian girls, I don't want to fuck a girl who is not doing the job on their own free will.

To which '**Horizontal pleasures**' replies "They do bareback as they know the punters want bareback." After him, several other sex buyers chime in to say that it is the women themselves who "would rather pay a

Sergei” and to dispel the idea of human trafficking as described by “**rolf32313**’. Going as far as to challenge the concept of pimping, a tactic that is used, tellingly, by sex industry advocates and so called ‘sex worker’s rights’ organizations. For example, ‘**Dani**’ writes “Having a pimp doesn't mean you are trafficked. It just means you cant be arsed [sic] with all the hassle so have someone do it all for you and some are happy to pay a large cut of their earnings to avoid all of the extra work.”

To which ‘**Toby**’ replies with a somber rebuttal: “My unit had a Romanian WG in after being stabbed, and came up as Hep-B positive, HIV positive, and something else (can't remember what). She had no passport, and was living with a 'friend' whose address and phone number she could not remember. When the interpreter explained that she was HIV positive (and the rest) the WG showed no surprise at all, so may have already been aware of it. She was arrested upon discharge, due to suspected connections with trafficking. Bareback a Romanian WG? I'd rather stick my cock in a jar of angry bees.”

The thread of sex buyers decides to ignore ‘**Toby**’s’ input and instead cling to the rosier idea that pimping and trafficking are just misunderstood social phenomena. The conversation ends with the rest of the men saying they agree with this revamped version of the “happy hooker” myth. They agree that even among Romanians, who are notorious for their depressing service and constant talk of children left back home,

sick relatives and economic hardships, the most likely scenario is that their pimps are actually managers who help the women set up their own business so that they themselves may become pimps for their impoverished friends back home and therefore empower their whole communities. This entire thread is, in a sense, a triumph for both sexual neoliberalism as described by de Miguel and the “sex work narrative” as explained by Ekis Ekman.

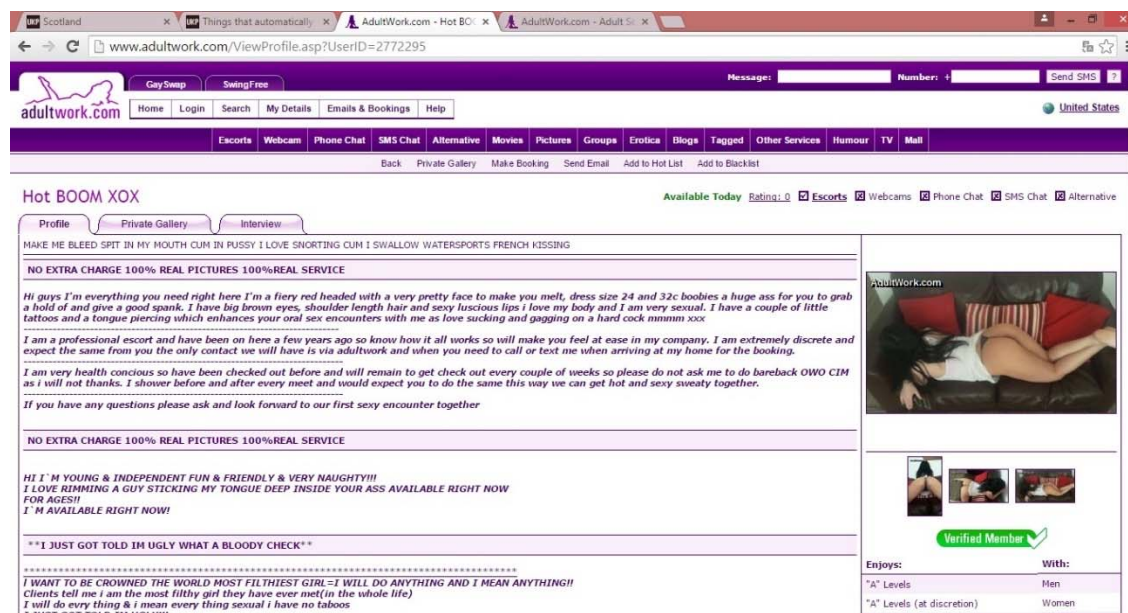
The men in the online community forum did manage to inadvertently redirect me towards a profile of what, according to sex buyers, was a clear sign of a trafficked woman or girl. They have a thread titled ‘Things that automatically turn you off an AdultWork profile.’ Sex buyers like **‘bangwanin’** said “Age restrictions...what does it matter what age you are, the cash is the same colour !!” **‘Trinity’** listed among his dislikes ‘Romanians’ and **‘Hector\_100’** says he gets turned off by “messy coffee tables in pics.”

**‘tartanspartan’** however wrote that a certain profile had “all the hallmarks of a pimp/wg/Romanian with a poor grasp of English” and fellow sex buyers agreed that it appeared written by a pimp.

The profile starts with an all caps message that says “MAKE ME BLEED SPIT IN MY MOUTH CUM IN PUSSY I LOVE SNORTING CUM I SWALLOW WATERSPORTS FRENCH KISSING” and includes disjointed and inconsistent messages that appeared lifted from different

pages. At some points, it has well-written sentences that includes “I am very health conscious so do not ask me to do bareback” but at other points the profile becomes frantic and incoherent. It also states “HI I’M YOUNG & INDEPENDENT FUN & FRIENDLY & VERY NAUGHTY!! I LOVE RIMMING A GUY STICKING MY TONGUE DEEP INSIDE YOUR ASS AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW FOR AGES!! I’M AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW”

The majority of profiles for women in prostitution include a schedule for booking and have a list of sex acts that are offered (and things that are not on offer) with everything crafted to fit the specific alleged personality of the woman on the site. This profile however, has no such distinction, everything is on offer, and it stands out for the level of violence and desperation that it conveys.



Scotland x Things that automatically x AdultWork.com - Hot BO x AdultWork.com - Adult S x

www.adultwork.com/ViewProfile.asp?UserID=2772295

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Available Today Rating: 0 Escorts Webcam Phone Chat SMS Chat Alternative

Profile Private Gallery Interview

MAKE ME BLEED SPIT IN MY MOUTH CUM IN PUSSY I LOVE SHORTING CUM I SWALLOW WATERSPORTS FRENCH KISSING

NO EXTRA CHARGE 100% REAL PICTURES 100%REAL SERVICE

Hi guys I'm everything you need right here I'm a fiery red headed with a very pretty face to make you melt, dress size 24 and 32c boobies a huge ass for you to grab a hold of and give a good spank. I have big brown eyes, shoulder length hair and sexy luscious lips I love my body and I am very sexual. I have a couple of little tattoos and a tongue piercing which enhances your oral sex encounters with me as love sucking and gagging on a hard cock mmmm xxx

I am a professional escort and have been on here a few years ago so know how it all works so will make you feel at ease in my company. I am extremely discrete and expect the same from you the only contact we will have is via adultwork and when you need to call or text me when arriving at my home for the booking.

I am very health conscious so have been checked out before and will remain to get check out every couple of weeks so please do not ask me to do bareback OWO CIM as I will not thanks. I shower before and after every meet and would expect you to do the same this way we can get hot and sexy sweaty together.

If you have any questions please ask and look forward to our first sexy encounter together

NO EXTRA CHARGE 100% REAL PICTURES 100%REAL SERVICE

HI I' M YOUNG & INDEPENDENT FUN & FRIENDLY & VERY NAUGHTY!!!  
I LOVE RIMMING A GUY STICKING MY TONGUE DEEP INSIDE YOUR ASS AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW FOR AGES!!  
I' M AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW!

\*\*I JUST GOT TOLD IM UGLY WHAT A BLOODY CHECK\*\*

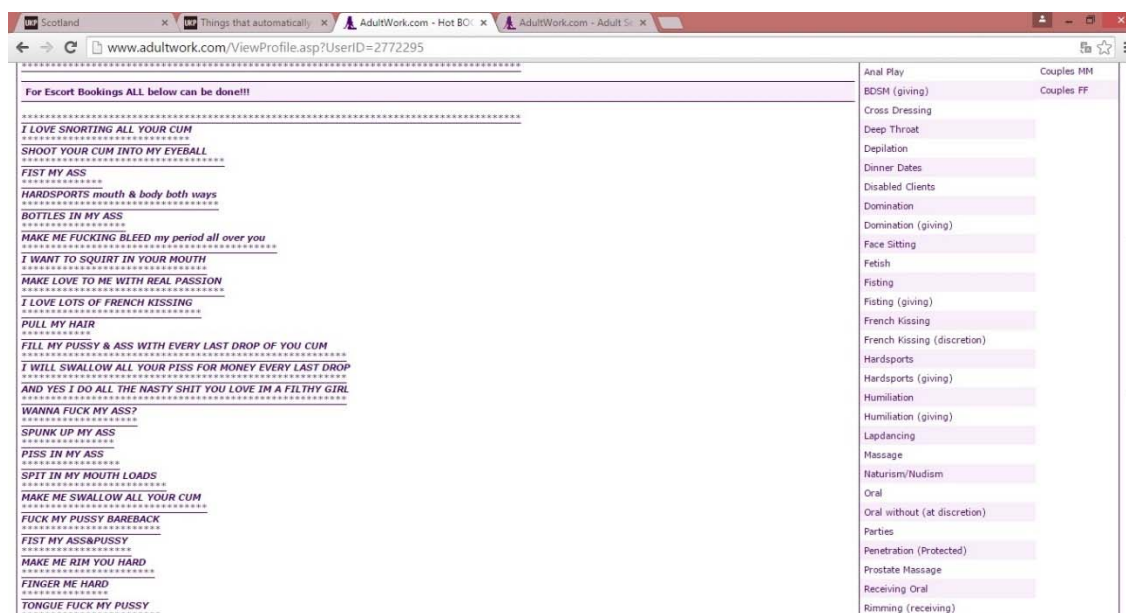
I WANT TO BE CROWNED THE WORLD MOST FILTHIEST GIRL-I WILL DO ANYTHING AND I MEAN ANYTHING!!  
Clients tell me I am the most filthy girl they have ever met(in the whole life)  
I will do every thing & I mean every thing sexual I have no taboos  
I WANT CUNT TRY IN MY MOUTH

AdultWork.com

Verified Member

Enjoys: With:

"A" Levels Men  
"A" Levels (at discretion) Women



The woman in the profile doesn't even have a name on her profile. It is only listed as 'Hot BOOM XOX' with some pictures of a half-naked young woman or girl. She is listed as a 21-year-old Brazilian woman living in Scotland. I made the screengrab on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and by the time of writing the thesis over a year later the profile was gone.

- **“She Was Being Mechanical”: When Women Treat Prostitution Like Work**

Perhaps the biggest complain sex buyers have apart from a woman who says no to “too many things” or “too many times” is that the women remind them, either implicitly or explicitly that prostitution is a job that they need to do, for whatever reason, and that they are not their out of sheer sexual desire for sex buyers. As discussed in the analysis of the ‘Girlfriend Experience’, most of the sex buyers who posted reviews would

rate positive if the woman somehow made a convincing effort to pretend she had authentic desire for them but would feel deeply disappointed if they didn't.

**'Medium Bang Theory'** writes that he is in awe with **'Helena'** (No. 120870) because as soon as she entered the room she gave him the impression that "she was getting as excited as me and was impatient to progress." He commends how "incredibly affectionate" she was and how "unreserved her kissing was". To him "this was real sex" and "for the first time in over a hundred punts, I actually felt like a credible porn star." He does comment that once the hour he paid for was over "Helena' clearly wasn't keen on chatting into overtime (6:00 seems to be her last appointment)" but still writes that "the expressions GFE and PSE are hopelessly over-used by us punters but, uniquely in my experience, Helena fully justifies both."

What **'Helena'** managed to do was provide an illusion, that, for the hour that **'Medium Bang Theory'** paid for, she deeply cared about him. If we combine this analysis with my analysis of the **'Girlfriend Experience'** and the men's rejection of women's ability to say 'no', then we get the broader perspective that what sex buyers are interested in is not merely sex as a physical experience: they want a controllable woman who functions as a robot and not as a full human being.

Therefore, when the women treat prostitution as a job like any other, with its numbing monotony and repetitiveness, the spell gets broken. Sex buyers are fully aware that they are paying for that spell, though (after all, they are paying in cash and up front) but at the same time they also want to be sold the idea that they are not. What sex buyers are looking for is the complete opposite to a “professional”, detached performance.

A sex buyer who goes by ‘**cheaperthanawife**’ writes a review of ‘**Serena**’ (No. 122484) that chronicles his disappointment in her for not performing the job as if it was leisure. He writes:

Serena was polite and friendly before and after the event, but was not so keen when we got down to business. OWO without any real enthusiasm, and then she wanted to move straight onto sex. I had to slow things down by asking to kiss (her profile offers GFE), but again it was me kissing her without any enthusiasm in return. The whole thing was just a cold mechanical event.

I understand that a young 18 year old may not dream of sex with a 50 year old guy, but equally I expect better than this. Out of principle I make every effort for the lady, I am always clean and well presented, I am always polite and respect the lady's personal rules, and though I say it myself I keep myself fit and do not look

my age. So I am sorry Serena, beautiful as you are I will not return, as I left feeling disrespected I am afraid.”

Similarly to ‘**cheaperthanawife**’, ‘**laptops**’ explains in his review of ‘**Chloe**’ (No. 120680) that although she was very attractive and the pictures were accurate, he was disappointed that it felt like she was going through the motions. ‘**Chloe**’ did everything he asked of her... but he had to ask her. He says “Turned over and she started wanking my soft cock. Why not try and be just a little sexy instead? Anyway I asked she play with my balls, which had the effect, [sic] unfortunately I had to continually ask Chloe to touch this, rub that etc.” He writes that after he had ejaculated, ‘Chloe’ became “much more friendly” and they managed to talk. Then things took a turn *for him*...

“Now at this point I would have recommended Chloe, in spite of the very by the book, sex by numbers routine. However when I returned to the room, Chloe barely said anything and had her back to me as I dressed. Now I had been friendly, clean and thoughtful, or at least I tried. When dressed I walked past Chloe and she just looked at me & didn't even get up. I leaned over and kissed her on the cheek & said goodbye. I couldn't have felt worse. This was another of those who do [sic] the terrible deed and then detach. Almost a female assisted wank if you like. I just want a GFE, why the hell is that so hard to find? This is my 200th report, possibly my last after this deeply depressing punt.”

‘Chloe’ did her job. He wanted a massage, she gave him a massage. He wanted a hand job, she gave him a hand job. He asked her to play with his testicles, she played with his testicles. They engaged in multiple sex positions, they chatted and towards the end she gave him a second massage. She did everything that he paid for; the problem was that apart from sex, he wanted the mental and emotional reassurance from her that he wasn’t being coercive and wasn’t using someone against their will. That he wasn’t a member of a dominant sex class taking advantage of one of the many systems that upholds his supremacy in relation to ‘Chloe’ and she couldn’t mask her own emotions any longer than the time that she had being paid to do so.

An interesting point of observation is that ‘laptops’ wanted the reassurance that ‘Chloe’ was just as interested in him as he was in her. But the thing is, he was only interested in her for 45 minutes. When you look at hundreds and hundreds of reviews you notice that as long as the women can pretend that attraction for that specific amount of time, they get rave reviews. If they can’t pretend, then they get marked negatively. For the men, perhaps this is no problem because, after all, they are the ones who are seeking the women in the industry and overwhelmingly, they are only paying once at least every couple of weeks. But for the women in the industry, the effort required to fake a convincingly enough

sexual attraction and the illusion of reciprocity, to multiple men in intervals of 45 minutes or 1 hour every single day must be taxing.

Is it any wonder that women like ‘**Chloe**’ couldn’t pretend a single minute pass ‘**laptops**’ allotted time?

What stood out to me was how difficult it must be to perform and cater to every single one of the desired needs of sex buyers. Sex buyers showed in my research that they have a very specific set of sex acts they want performed in a very specific manner and sometimes they were so detailed as to wanting to control the tone of voice the women used or the clothing they wore or the way they wanted the women to look at them. If we think about how many sex buyers a woman in prostitution sees every day, it is not a coincidence that they may have trouble adjusting their performance to the demands of each man.

From the perspectives of the sex buyers, these online communities are helpful not only because they allow them to be specific about their demands but also because they know agencies keep track of review boards to make sure the women are doing the work as the sex buyers want. In this sense, the online communities and the agencies work in tandem to provide the most complacent “service” to sex buyers.

The agencies keep track of the review boards meaning that they would immediately find out if a woman is not performing to the sex buyers

liking which could jeopardize her job security. Meaning that the review boards and online communities serve a policing function to ensure complacency, or as I call it 'agentic complacency' in the women in the sex industry which may have an effect on the number of positive reviews presented in the online communities.

## CONCLUSION

In the study *Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Don't Buy Sex*, authored by researchers from the Prostitution Research and Education organization and co-authored by Neil Malmuth from the University of California-Los Angeles, it was found that men who pay for sex share some higher indicators of a “hostile masculinity” and a “lack of empathy with women in prostitution. The study found that sex buyers view women in prostitution as intrinsically different from other women” (Farley et. al, 2015).

More damningly, the study found that men who pay for sex “share certain key characteristics with men at risk of committing sexual aggression as documented by research based on the leading scientific model of the characteristics of non-criminal sexually aggressive men.”

The study estimates that only about 1% of the literature regarding prostitution centered sex buyers (Farley et. al, 2015). Yet the literature has increased in recent years, in part, due to the emergence of the Nordic model started in Sweden in 1999 that positions the demand to pay for sex front and center in legislation (Jeffreys, 62).

The Nordic Model is a legislative approach that criminalizes the demand side of prostitution while it decriminalizes the supply because it understands prostitution as a form of violence against women and girls

that is incompatible with equality (Ekis Ekman, xiv) (Moran, 209) (Banyard, 226). This criminalization does not mean that sex buyers go to jail or prison, just that they pay a fine and their status as sex buyers goes on their public record. The money collected through these fines is then used to pay for the support services that the vast majority of women in prostitution say they need.

The Nordic Model legislation is the result of a nationwide inquiry started in 1977 conducted by Swedish experts who spent years investigating the issue inside brothels, talking with sex buyers, pimps and most importantly with the women and girls working in prostitution. The result was an 800-page *Prostitution Inquiry* report that contained 140 pages that were solely the words and testimonies of people living in prostitution (Ekis Ekman, 17).

The report that led to the Nordic Model had a controversial start after the lead investigator, Inger Lindqvist, who did not participate in the research process but was invited by a strip club owner to visit his facilities and thereafter became convinced that the sex trade was “safe”, decided to dismiss all the evidence collected in the *Prostitution Inquiry*’ report and edited out of every single one of the personal testimony that the people in prostitution had shared with investigators. Lindqvist ended up publishing a thin report of just statistics of prostitution in Sweden.

Lindqvist later admitted that her intention was that the 800-page report would never be published but, after fierce backlash from the women's rights movement in Sweden, the report of the Inquiry was made available in its entirety (Ekis Ekman, 18). The backlash against the way the testimonies of people in prostitution (overwhelmingly girls and women) were being deliberately silenced, the role the sex industry lobby played in trying to sanitize it and the public consternation at the content of the report "transformed societies' views of prostitution" in Sweden and led to what we now understand as the Nordic Model of prostitution.

As countries (more recently France in 2015) join Sweden in adopting the Nordic Model (Banyard, 231) more research is needed to explore local realities and particularities that may not be applicable to the Swedish experience.

Yet at the same time that new research is trying to bring into the mainstream of society the reasoning and words of sex buyers, in order to illustrate prostitution more fully, sex industry advocates and literature supportive of the trade remain the norm. This pushback is rarely done by sex-buyers themselves, and instead is promoted by "sex work" advocates and crucially, by academia. This literature portrays sex buyers as "ordinary, harmless men, exercising their rights in the marketplace as consumers" (Jeffreys, 62).

Sex industry advocates argue that men who buy sex are interested in pleasure and intimacy while survivors and abolitionists argue that sex buyers seek entitlement to women's bodies through coercion and violence. The research presented in this thesis suggest that while male privilege, male entitlement and misogyny are prevalent to the point of being the norm in online communities for sex buyers, we must make a more nuanced analysis to understand how this misogyny is enacted and what logic lies behind the sex buyers' rationalization for it.

Sander's *Paying for Pleasure* argues that researchers who are investigating the sex industry through a lens of "seduction and sexual promise" end up "clouding" their findings by framing it in the context of solicitation and sexualization, meaning that we should talk about the sex trade... without actually mentioning sex (Sanders, 25). Interestingly, although the book is titled *Paying for Pleasure*, it rarely mentions the sexual aspects of the sex industry which, as I've explained in the literature review, is a deliberate effort on the part of Sanders. *Paying for Pleasure* is therefore situated in the realm of ideas, as Andrea Dworkin argues, which is the realm where academia goes, when it wants to feel better, while discussing prostitution and the sex industry.

Sanders also forgets to mention in her book that she is a member of the UK branch of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (Jeffreys, 63). The NSWP is an influential "sex worker's rights" organization that in

2009 co-chaired along with UNAIDS the United Nations policy on “HIV and Sex Work” which eventually asked countries worldwide to decriminalize the sex industry (including pimping and brothel-keeping). It was later revealed that at the time the Global Network of Sex Work Project was co-chairing the committee that shaped the United Nation’s policy on “sex work” and HIV, it’s vice-president Alejandra Gil was running a brothel in Tlaxcala, Mexico that commercialized over 200 women. Ms. Gil was found guilty of human trafficking for the purposes of sex in 2014.

What this reveals is that oftentimes literature on sex buyers is being produced by people with links to organizations that directly benefit men who paid for sex. In turn, this literature is being presented as a “refreshing” and “nonjudgmental” alternative view of sex buyers. In short, it is being presented as neutral when it is anything but.

The media rarely investigates further and usually ends up promoting the narrative of sex industry advocates (and therefore sex buyers) without questioning how it is being produced or by whom. For example, Sanders conducted a study on the people working in prostitution which found that “a majority of respondents described their work as ‘flexible’ and even ‘fun.’ More than half said they find their work ‘empowering’ and ‘rewarding’” (Miller, 2015). This study merited headlines such as “U.K. Sex Workers Report High Job Satisfaction” with

journalists and fellow academics (particularly feminists academics) failing to connect the dots from works like Sanders and sex buyer's rights in the sex industry.

These conflicts of interests between literature designed to further sex buyer's rights and political capital and the sex industry is not uncommon; on the contrary, it is a pattern (Ekis Ekman, 68). A significant number of prominent so-call "sex worker's rights" organizations have ties to pimping and brothel keeping (Barnyard, 187).

This research and thesis seeks to, above all, present sex buyers in their own words. Although I would never claim to be a so-called impartial person, particularly given my background in the anti-violence movement and shelter work where the voices and experiences of survivors are the cornerstone that guide our work, I made a point to illustrate each part of my analysis with examples and quotes from sex buyers themselves.

The words and experiences of sex buyers in online communities reveal a camaraderie that fosters friendship among the men and normalizes the buying of sex... often at the expense of women. This is done through the use of humor, innuendo and a sense of solidarity between the men in the online communities. It is also done through the policing of each other. The male sex buyers never question their entitlement to women's bodies in an industry predicated on the sexual objectification of women (de Miguel, 153), in part, because they have

community with each other. This sense of community allows for sex buyers to assume that paying women for sex is inevitable and unquestionable. And even if they were to question it, sex buyers have an entire system of oppression that justifies their privilege and entitlement.

Writing a review of women in the sex industry is not about journaling their own experiences as sex buyers; is about sharing the collective power men, as a class, have under patriarchy in the sex industry, with other men (de Miguel, 170). Writing reviews also works to legitimize brothels and agencies as they rely on positive reviews to “promote” or “advertise” the women. Negative or neutral reviews, however, serve to remind women in the sex industry of the power sex buyers have over them. Too many negative reviews become a threat to a woman’s job security. So, a woman in prostitution knows that she relies on getting positive reviews to keep the job. This may condition her performance in several ways.

This dynamic is particularly significant given that economic factors are the biggest push factor for women in prostitution as evidenced in the essays documented in *Prostitution Narratives* (Charlotte, 180) (Mademoiselle, 112). In this way, review boards and agencies have built a co-dependency that ensures what in a capitalist marketplace may be referred to as “customer satisfaction” (DeVault, 2016) and consolidates sex buyer’s power in the sex trade.

Some scholars argue that what sex buyers desire the most is intimacy, not sex (Sanders, 109). But as stated, all of the sex buyers in the review board demanded specific sex acts and absolutely none of the reviews that I read focused on companionship or dialogue. No sex buyer ever refused sex and, on the contrary, they insisted on sex acts even after it became abundantly clear that the women were rejecting them or were experiencing dissociation.

In this thesis I argue that although sex buyers appear clear that they participate in the sex industry, precisely because of the sex, most of the sex buyers' reviews and commentary I read, are keen to specify that they want women in prostitution to *perform* the role of the empowered prostituted woman who loves her work and experiences authentic desire with her client while the sex takes place.

In this way, sex buyers appropriate the language of the "sex work" narrative and directly benefit from the prominence of sexual neoliberalism both as an economic system as well as a discourse. The sex buyers in my research appeared genuinely puzzled when women were disengaged or sometimes unresponsive. They often wrote in their reports that they were confused as to why a woman may be in prostitution "if she doesn't love her job."

For decades feminists, but particularly radical and Marxist feminists, worked to center economic need and abuse as push factors that

drove women and girls to prostitution and as the lens through which society understood women's relation to the sex industry (Barry, 1979) (Jeffreys, 1987) (Raymond, 2013). However, nowadays sex buyers have found themselves in the midst of a feminist movement (shrewdly co-opted both by patriarchy and capitalism) that legitimizes their sexual entitlement to the commercialized bodies of women under the discourse of rights, labor and empowerment. It is unsurprising that sex buyers would appropriate a discourse of 'choice' and 'empowerment', facilitated by feminism academics, since it ultimately serves to uphold their own supremacy under a patriarchal system. Can we blame them for being confused when a woman in prostitution is unresponsive? As de Miguel states, for sex buyers today, paying for sex is "a symbolic restoration of men's dominance in societies formally egalitarian" (de Miguel, 149).

- **'Agentic Complacency': No Dead Dolls But Also No Rejection**

During the course of my research, it was confusing for me to figure out what the men in the online communities wanted. They want the "intimacy" of a girlfriend but within the framework of 30 minutes-1 hour. They want an enthusiastic partner that experiences pleasure but not *too much* pleasure. They want a partner who takes the initiative but who also only wants to do whatever sex acts the sex buyers want to do. It's not that they want women to be 'passive' or 'objects' even though the sex industry relies, by definition, on objectification of the bodies of overwhelmingly

girls and women (Norma and Tankard Reist, 2016). Sex buyers do want subjects; active, engaged, enthusiastic women to have sex with but in a very controlled manner: a manner controlled by them with the power that money grants them.

What I noticed is that when women “engaged” or were “active” in a manner they disliked, they punished them by writing a negative review. When women in prostitution displayed agency that they didn’t like, they got a bad review. But agency as a concept works both ways: a person can have the agency to say yes, but they can also say no. In the review boards, however, the only agency that counts is the agency to say yes to whatever the sex buyers want from the women in prostitution.

Reviews in general are important because the agencies keep track of them and rely on them to promote the women on their websites. The negative reviews hold a particularly coercive power: too many of them and you could get in trouble with your agency. A woman with “too many” negative reviews could potentially lose her job. And since almost all negative reviews are reviews where the women demonstrated some form of free will, agentic power (to say no to something, for example) or resistance (by refusing to speak with the men) this ensures that most women know how to behave in order to get a positive review. It is a sleek system in which sex buyers reify their own power in the sex industry by controlling what kind of behavior is acceptable and what kind of behavior

will get you a reputation as a woman with “too many no’s or too much attitude” to quote a phrase very popular in negative reviews.

The review boards are not trivial: they enforce coercion by sustaining through their constant influx of new reviews, a framework that delimitates what is acceptable behavior and what will get you marked down.

For example, “**blackpool\_rock**” writes that his experience with ‘Petrah’ (No. 120865) was difficult for him because she wasn’t being collaborative. He writes:

Finally she enters the room and she looks great but I get the feeling she is quiet and unfriendly, there’s a sort of uncomfortable silence and I am thinking this is going to be hard work....

Eventually she got going and in fairness her oral technique was quite good, I was fairly sensitive that day and it felt good, her bra was off and as she started to give me oral I put my hand on her knickers to feel her pussy but her legs were closed and remained firmly closed.

I slipped a finger inside the edge of her knickers and I ran it around the edge of her knickers in various places, she didn’t take the hint that I wanted to get them off or get my hand inside the top of her knickers to gently pull them down at which point she stopped

giving me oral and told me to “Chill out” which was frankly offensive. So, by now my suspicions of a hard punt were being confirmed as a bad punt with attitude.... She proceeds to keep asking me if I’ve cum every 30 seconds which is annoying.

Note that he himself didn’t take the hint that she didn’t want him to touch her vulva. Or that it was her who was probably offended by the man with the curious hands. Alas, **‘blackpool\_rock’** created a summary in which he lists the positives and negatives of his experience.

“Positives: Good looking. Good figure. Tight down below. Negatives: Poor service. Poor attitude. Disinterested. Unfriendly and aloof despite her write up on Sandy’s stating “warm and friendly personality”. Poor timekeeping and short time in the room. Primadonna girl.”

Another sex buyer who watched his experience turn sour was **‘Passionate Lover’** in his experience with ‘Roxy’ (No. 120821). He writes:

I wanted to see a Brazilian girl after seeing the recommendations for Roxy decided to see her. She asked if I wanted to fuck but I asked to kiss and also lick her pussy. At this point the experience started to go downhill as Roxy said she didn’t want to kiss as she had just had her lunch and could still taste the food in her mouth. I was frankly disappointed as kissing is essential for a GFE for me. In my opinion a true professional would have used

some mouthwash or taken some mints than let it affect the service that is provided...

She then gave me another blowjob which was again very good, enthusiastic with eye contact. We then moved onto sex and she told me to have my legs straight and kept on telling me to position myself correctly. I've been punting for years and never had any issues with other girls and at this point I was quite pissed off with the No's by now. I got the feeling she wanted to get the intimate aspects of the punt out of the way quickly. However, once I had cummed she then was ok.

In summary Roxy is beautiful, her blowjobs are enthusiastic and her massage was good. However I feel she let herself down. It is a shame and overall given that this experience lacked GFE I won't be recommending her. I think I will live out my Latina fantasies with someone else.

In this scenario, 'Roxy' was the one who "let herself down" by not playing into all the fantasies that '**Passionate Lover**' had expected. It is clear that this performance itself is what is branded as the service. Note that 'Roxy' didn't refused any of the sex acts, she just adjusted the manner in which they were conducted.

Based on my research in the online communities and review boards, a positive review is a review in which the woman performed every sex act in the exact liking of the sex buyer. Most of the reviews, from what I could gather, were positive. This could be open for interpretation and my own analysis would be that the women, being aware of what sex buyers are looking for and the fact that their agencies keep track of their performances and the reviews sex buyers write of them, have learned to perpetuate the performance most of the time to ensure their job security.

This is something that I describe as ‘agentic complacency.’ It is illustrated by Bader when he writes that in his work as a psychologist who oftentimes has clients who are sex buyers, he has analyzed that in the sex industry:

The man doesn't have to please a prostitute, doesn't have to make her happy, doesn't have to worry about her emotional needs or demands. He can give or take without the burden of reciprocity. He can be entirely selfish. He can be especially aggressive or especially passive, and not only is the woman not upset, she acts aroused. He is not responsible for her in any way. She is entirely focused on him. He is the center of the world. Now, of course, these interactions are scripted. The prostitute is acting. But it doesn't matter. For men who like to go to go to prostitutes, the illusion of authenticity is enough” (Bader, 2008).

The woman in prostitution is expected to perform authenticity but this authenticity is only relevant as long as it deludes the sex buyer into believing that she is truly enjoying being there not only with him, but *for him*.

When it comes to online communities for sex buyers, the idea of an ‘agentic complacency’ helps bridge the gap between the requirements of a positive review and the consequences of a negative review. The term would be used to describe “the performance of sexual empowerment and enjoyment that male sex buyers demand from women in prostitution, under the invisible threat that failure to perform this supposed sexual empowerment to the male sex buyers’ precise standards could affect the job security of women in prostitution.”

In sex buyers terms, this is often commented on in the online communities as wanting an experience with a woman in prostitution in which she was proactive enough to not be “a dead doll” but also didn’t become *too agentic* to the point where they could express any form of rejection towards him as a sex buyer.

- **“Why Do We Punt?”: Sex Buyer Reasoning**

Perhaps the most important question in this entire research was answered by the sex buyers in the online communities themselves. I

would like to end this thesis with the sex buyers speaking in their own words explaining that reasoning.

A sex buyer who goes by the username **‘wristjob’** started the thread on UKPunting titled “Why do we punt?” saying he was inspired to ask fellow sex buyers to list the reasons they pay for sex. As for himself, **‘wristjob’** writes:

Puntingwise I guess there are a number of reasons to do it as already discussed. When I first heard it called a hobby I thought "good one" but really it is. Like stamp collecting or train spotting in some ways (ok sad lol). I think I've only ever seen the same girl 3 times on 2 occasions. Even when I find a girl who is absolutely great there's that desire to go to other girls. God knows I've had my fair share of bad punts and nobody is quite as cynical as a touring EE but I'll still go to them knowing I'll probably get a crap service and could be spending the money on a much better "regular".

A strong aspect is like ticking off names - having gorgeous women. Other times it really is about the sex, and a good punt is amazing. It's like great sex but better - you can be purely selfish. have a great blowjob and don't go within 20 yards of a lawnmower. Every man deserves that once in his life (smiley emoji).

**'Milky911'** opines in more simple terms. He says: "I punt because I can. Part is the chase and unloading your balls. I started 30 years ago so I've seen things change but the hunt is still a big part of the fun. Used to be driving around getting the one that was looking the sexiest now the Internet takes over. Also it's a strange principle that you give a girl money and she sucks you off. I know if a 75 year old woman wanted me to go down on her for 100 to 150 I'd pass."

To which **'Jimmyredcab'** replies "My best punting days were on the streets, no doubt in my mind ----- the Internet has it's good points but it can't replace seeing the girl in the flesh and choosing."

**'CBPaul'** says "I punt because I can and because I enjoy it. Also allows me to find the type of girl I fancy on a given day and do the business. Many years since that was a vague possibility with a civvy (a woman outside of prostitution)."

**'smiths'** chimes in saying "I punt as I like variety of women and punting is a guaranteed sure thing assuming the WG is honest in achieving that variety, all for cash. Its also no strings, no hassle and i can walk away afterwards anonymously. No wasting my time buying drinks and a meal to get my leg over. Ideally within a few minutes a WG has her tongue down my throat ticking my tonsils. If the above occurs its also fun and i punt for the sex and fun."

**'threehillman'** says "for me it's the fact that within 5 mins, I'll be into the knickers of a gorgeous girl who I've never met. Incredible!"

**'charming\_red'** writes "Because when not in a relationship, we need pussy. Every morning when I see all these beautiful women looking fresh and radiant I sit there wondering if they fuck like WGs, give OWO, 69s, round 2 or are they just wet socks in bed."

**'itk'** writes "Exactly the same for me. Began 20 years ago and also enjoyed picking the best looking WG from those on the streets, then shagging them for a reasonably cheap price. Now I do as it's a way of shagging a fit bird who is 20 years younger than me. (Not that I've many this past year, been a very poor year thus far)."

**'Sparquin'** says "It is also about being able to fuck different nationalities and ethnicities. Would never have had a chance with any but Brit girls in my youth but now I can access a veritable United Nations should the mood take me. And the wallet permit."

**'zakkmorrisson'** says "For me: VARIETY, in whatever form that takes. Including TS (transsexual) very occasionally... imagine trying to scratch THAT particular itch without punting. I've lost count of the number of times I've seen an insanely hot girl in the street, and that's got my spidey senses tingling.... 45 mins later - bingo. Balls-deep in a hot size 6 EE."

**'Thepacifist'** writes "so I can avoid rejection and have sex with beautiful women."

**'superblues'** says "I could waste time, money and energy on civvy street with some girl I fancy or just go to a wg...it's easier to go to a wg and a lot cheaper. Think about it, I would need to do the whole wine and dine thing first, cost a fortune, out up with mood swings etc etc and still no guarantee of a shag - easier to go to a wg."

**'Secondskin69'** chimes in with "Because I can rent an Aston Martin for an hour or two, but can only afford to buy a Ford Focus. And whilst I love my "Ford Focus" I do like to test drive sexy new models that are out of my league."

The thread on the online community was fairly long but there was not a single sex buyer who commented on his desire for 'intimacy' or "because they are widows" as some academics claim (Sanders, 41). Sex buyers are clear in their own words in stating that paying women for sex is, for them, about treating women as interchangeable commodities and escaping a society in which women must be treated as their equal. They are fully aware of the power they possess not only as men under a patriarchy but as being economically advantaged enough to be able to afford a superfluous transaction like paying for sex.

The “sex of prostitution” was described as “the one-sided use of a woman in which the woman’s pleasure and personhood are irrelevant” (Jeffeys, 65) and in their own words, sex buyers admit that it is their own sexual experience that is paramount. It is almost as if the literature, news articles and non-profit organizations that promote the sex industry (and their supporters and sympathizers) under the banner of rights, labor and empowerment, have never in fact listened to what sex buyers have to say.

Sex buyers are fully aware that they enter prostitution with a depressing amount of male privilege and male entitlement over women and girl’s bodies under patriarchy. This male privilege and entitlement is not ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’; it is socially constructed and as such it can be challenged and dismantled or reinforced. The review boards and online communities for sex buyers offer an insight into how this facet of patriarchy solidifies its power and further perpetuates itself.

To hide the actual words, intentions and actions of sex buyers in an effort to mask the material realities of prostitution, as sex industry advocates oftentimes do both in academia and in the name of feminism, is -simply put- a betrayal of the women’s movement and the reification of the “male sex right” that only serves to uphold a politics of sexual neoliberalism that benefits patriarchal power and its supporters at the expense of the lives, safety and the status of women and girls as a class worldwide.

- **Further Research**

There are two distinctive limitations in my research of online communities for sex buyers that should be explored further in subsequent investigations.

First, this thesis centers online communities and review boards for sex buyers in England as this was the place where they originated and are the most well-known communities for sex buyers worldwide. Although there are threads that focus exclusively on men's experiences with prostitution outside of England, almost all of my research is contained within those national boundaries. The review boards and online communities have expanded and have been exported into an array of countries and continents, for example: Spain, Israel, Argentina, Canada and the United States. More research is needed to examine what commonalities and divergence could be found among sex buyers on a global scale and crucially, what analysis could be made from a more demographically diverse group of sex buyers.

Similarly, every single one of the reviews that I read, without exception, featured a man paying a woman for sex. It is possible that further research could look at review boards that specifically address either same-sex communities or communities where the gender binary is not as prevalent. We learn very little about queer spaces in online review boards as they seem to work to perpetuate a very narrow version of toxic

masculinity. However, I would note that perhaps centering online communities outside of the mainstream that subvert the male sex buyer/prostituted woman binary may present a distorted landscape that would not be representative of the sex industry itself as a whole.

## GLOSSARY

- **Understanding The Language of Sex Buyers**

As Malarek notes, it seems not surprising that sex buyers have remained in “the periphery of prostitution” (Malarek, 07). This is in part because “most people have simply surmised there was nothing particularly unique about them or interesting enough to warrant in-depth research or analysis. Underlying this conjuncture is a basic assumption: men who buy sex are just doing what men do” (Malarek, 13).

Therefore, most people have no idea that online communities for sex buyers even exist. For example, whenever I would tell people what my research was about, everyone (without exception) asked me what was an online community for sex buyer and how did it worked. When I explained that it essentially worked as a way for men to review women in prostitution they reacted in disbelief.

But even though most people don’t know about the online communities and review boards, sex buyers themselves have created an impressive network of connections and features to optimize their experiences of buying sex in the sex industry. They not only ‘review’ or ‘recommend’ women to each other, but they have created a place that serves to validate their personal identities as sex buyers. Malarek, who writes both about sex buyers he himself has interviewed in person as well

as what he has seen in online communities for sex buyers, writes that the communities help men “rally around one another, offering comfort, validating each other’s feelings and fears, and valiantly defending their lifestyle against attacks by outsiders or creeping feelings of guilt” (Malarek, 9).

One form for them to bond with one another is in the use of language. Review boards and the online communities for sex buyers are laden with inside jokes, innuendo, abbreviations and code words that are meant to reinforce the sense of a tight-knit community and camaraderie. Personally, I confess that it took me a while to be able to browse the communities without consulting the ‘Glossary’ provided by PuntingWiki and even in the final stages of my research, I still relied heavily on their set of definitions and abbreviations.

The Glossary is described by the sex buyers at PuntingWiki as “a glossary of terms commonly used in PuntingWiki and on UKPunting forums.” The first item on the Glossary is the “10 Commandments” which is described as “a series of do’s and don’ts a prossie rattles off at the start of a booking. E.g. “Don’t touch my tits, don’t pinch my bum, no kissing, etc.” Many punters see this as a warning shot that the punt will be shit as the prossie is holding back or following a script.” The word ‘script’ hyperlinks to the following description within the same Glossary: “an order of services a prossie follows with every punter. E.g. starts with a

massage, moves on to oral, finishes in missionary. It is like she is following a film script and hates to deviate from it as she loses control.”

The Glossary is mostly a list of abbreviations to all the sex acts that are usually featured in the online communities. For example, OWO means fellatio without a condom and CIM stands for ‘come in mouth’ meaning ejaculation without a condom in the woman’s mouth. DFK means deep French kissing and is described as “passionate kissing with tongue deep in the other person’s mouth” (not to be confused with ‘light French kissing or ‘French kissing’). FS stands for ‘full sex’ and is described as “a rarely used term meaning penetrative sex took place with penis.” The PuntingWiki describes a set of sex acts (or services) such as GFE and PSE. The first is an abbreviation for “the girlfriend experience” which involves “an escort experience like being with a real girlfriend. There is no agreed list of services included but you can expect kissing or DFK, oral sex and full sex. It does not include the most adventurous services you might get with a PSE or fetish services.” Importantly, the GFE includes an expectation that emotional labor will be performed in the form of women being required to pretend they have a deep sense of intimacy with the sex buyer in question for whatever amount of time is being paid for.

Contrary to that, PSE stands for the “porn star experience” and is described as “a more adventurous, raunchy experience with an escort which usually includes deep throat or gagging and maybe anal sex. Quite

often, escorts offering these services will charge more than GFE escorts.” During the PSE, the woman is not required to include any pretense of emotional attachment or the façade of intimacy. In my findings, sex buyers would overwhelmingly ask for a girlfriend experience as opposed to a porn star experience.

A ‘Party Girl’ means “a prostitute who enjoys and is willing to take cocaine or other drugs with the punter.” And ‘WS’ stands for ‘watersports’ meaning urine play.

The Glossary, much like the communities themselves, is meant to build rapport and comradery among sex buyers, although often it is done at the expense of women. This is accomplished through the use of inside jokes and innuendo. For example, BOBFOC means “Body Off Baywatch, Face Off Crimewatch” a well-known acronym to describe a woman with a fit, glamour model body but an ugly face.”

A woman who is not a prostitute is described as a ‘civvy’ which is shortened from “civilian” (an appropriation of military language) and a review is called a FR or “field report.”

One of the most common terms found on the review boards is “RO” which stands for “Reverse Oral, cunnilingus, oral sex performed on a woman.” The term implies, of course, that the standard oral sex is

performed on men. When describing fellatio, the men simply say “oral”, OW (fellatio with a condom) or OWO (fellatio without a condom).

There is some evident racial profiling going on and an open acknowledgement that pimping is common in the sex trade. ‘Abdul’ is described as “Generic term for a South Asian pimp or punter,” ‘Kevin’ is a “popular phrase on UKP to describe an English Pimp,” and ‘Sergei’ is used to describe “an Eastern European pimp.”

- **Queer Language, Binary Reviews**

Interestingly, PuntingWiki presents the sex buyer community as impressively queer which I found originally interesting. There are abbreviations that are gender inclusive and present an array of different gender identities. According to PuntingWiki, there are escorts of all gender representations but also sex buyers. For example, “BFE” is defined as “the boyfriend experience. Sometimes used by male escorts,” “Kathoei” is described as “the Thai word for Ladyboy/Shemale” and “T-Girl” is described as “a term for a transgendered male who undergoes the necessary chemical and surgical procedures to become more feminine.”

This is worthy of note because in all my research, I did not find a single female or transgender sex buyer. Nor did I find a single male or transgender person working as a prostitute. The only same-sex relations that I found were “lesbian experiences” that were requested by the male

sex buyer and that required the women to “perform” a form of alleged lesbianism for a man.

It is possible that some of the people, either as sex buyers or the people in prostitution, could be transgender, or that I may have missed a rare female sex buyer, a male prostitute or a same-sex interaction. However, based on everything else I read and the language of the online communities, I get the impression that this was not the case.

For example, a sex buyer whose username is ‘**excessiveswine**’ writes about his experience with ‘Anna’ (No. 119480). He describes in the review section titled “The Lady” that “Anna is quite petite, very feminine and, in my honest opinion, very beautiful.” In the review of the encounter, he writes “her skin is so soft and womanly” and he also writes about the perceived tightness of her vaginal canal. When it comes to his own gender, although ‘**excessiveswine**’ didn’t make a formal statement about his identity and preferred pronouns, as a researcher I assume he identifies as male based on sentences such as “I’m sure many will appreciate condoms don’t do much for a man’s erection, particularly beyond 40, so I wasn’t quite hard enough at first but...”

Similarly, a sex buyer whose username is ‘**volvic**’, never quite stated his preferred gendered pronouns but his reviews are sprinkled with gendered language. This is demonstrated with sentences such as “After a while, thought I had better spunk up, otherwise she may just say “time”

and I would be left with a raging hard-on and mega spunk filled balls” (No. 123303) and “Her cunt was surprisingly tight actually and I could feel my sap rising. Bloody whore kept saying "slowly" as I was trying to jizz, which put me off anyway.” (No. 120925). So, although the communities had no clear identifiers for the gender identity of everyone involved in each encounter, through the process of inference I could pick up references that helped me understand what the context was in terms of gender representations.

- **“Sex work” Terminology in Online Communities**

Another term that is defined on PuntingWiki but that is remarkably rare in the actual review boards and online communities for sex buyers is the term “sex worker” defined as “a euphemism for prostitute, but also includes webcam girls, picture sellers and porn stars.” There are 26 abbreviations for terms that are meant to imply ‘prostitute’ (or ‘sex worker’), including denigrating terms such as “butterface: A woman with every part of her body looking good but her face.”

Among the terms that men use are ‘WG: Working Girl’, ‘Starfish: A woman that just lies, showing disinterest during sex, the opposite of what most punters want’, ‘Provider: A euphemism for a prostitute’ and ‘Indie: Another term for Independent. It implies that the escort works on her own and it’s not working for an agency, parlour or pimp’ and ‘Cum dodger: A

prossie that avoids a facial or CIM (come in mouth) by turning her head or closing her mouth.'

Interestingly, when I started the research, the opening page at Punternet spoke of 'Service provider reviews' meaning that women in prostitution were identified in review boards as "service providers." But when I went back into the website about a year later, they had changed the name to 'Escorts Reviews' meaning that they were now identified as escorts. Nevertheless, the language in the reviews remained the same and continues to feature the term "service provider" as a standard for prostitute. As a researcher, I personally took the liberty to not refer to the women as such because I find the term "service provider" particularly dehumanizing. Instead, I chose to use the word 'woman' or 'women' and when making a broader analysis, I used the terms 'prostitution' or 'prostitute.'

Out of all the terms and abbreviations provided by the Punting Wiki Glossary, during my investigation I found that the terms most sex buyers preferred when referring to the women they interacted with were 'escort' and 'prostitute' (or prossie) but the overwhelming favorite was 'service provider.' Service provider is a utilitarian term. Advocates for the sex industry have long understood the importance of framing the debate in terms that help normalize the industry. They have worked in concerted efforts to stigmatize words such as 'victim' and 'sexual exploitation' by

arguing that “such terms were moral concepts devoid of pragmatic content” (Raymond, 15). Terms like ‘service provider’ are entirely pragmatic but where does that leave the humanity of the women? The women in prostitution become a machine, an object whose purpose is to provide sexual services to men.

Rachel Moran, the Irish author and survivor advocate writes that in presenting sex as a service, the ‘sex work’ ideology is dehumanizing sex itself. Moran argues “if sex is just a service, then rape is just theft. If sex is to be equated with any other service, then we cannot complain about the rape of a woman in prostitution any differently than we could complain about someone having their sink fixed and not paying the plumber” (Moran, 27).

It is relevant to note the absence of the term ‘sex work’ or ‘sex worker’ in the review boards and online communities for sex buyers. I had assumed, based on my literature review and reading the work of sex industry advocates and so-called “sex worker rights” organizations, that in the sex industry, the language of “sex work” would be prevalent. For example, when Amnesty International decided to support the full decriminalization of the sex trade (including pimping and brothel-keeping), they did so by using the language of “sex worker’s rights” in the crafting of their policy. Indeed, in their consultations Amnesty International met exclusively with “sex work organizations” while

ignoring the voices and opinions of women who reject the term ‘sex work’ itself and prefer terms like ‘survivor,’ ‘former prostitute,’ ‘prostituted,’ ‘commercially sexually exploited person’ or ‘exited woman.’

In their press release, titled *Sex worker’s rights are human rights*, Amnesty International wrote: “We have chosen to advocate for the decriminalization of all aspects of consensual adult sex - sex work that does not involve coercion, exploitation or abuse. This is based on evidence and the real-life experience of sex workers themselves that criminalization makes them less safe.”

It seems strange that even among escorts, who are, in a way, in a far more privileged position than say, women who work on the streets, and who apply for the job at escort agencies, the language of sex work is completely absent from the online communities. None of the men I reviewed used the term “sex work” or “sex worker.”

It seems to me as if there is a sharp disconnect between the rhetoric and language of online communities and the one being used by academics who defend the sex industry. Nonetheless, either when sex buyers refer to women using utilitarian language or when academics co-opt the narrative of prostitution for their own benefits, both work to normalize and sanitize an industry to the detriment of the actual women in it and in turn serve the male privilege and male entitlement under a patriarchal system

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